TEACHING THIRD GRADE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE WAYS: IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

African American and other students of color have continued to score lower than White students in many classrooms and on achievement tests in every subject, especially in reading. The purpose of this study was to explore if there is a relationship between a teacher's cultural responsiveness and their third grade African American students' achievement, especially in reading. An additional purpose was to determine if African American students' perceptions of their teachers as culturally responsive was linked to their achievement and if teachers of African American students are effective or highly effective based on their level of cultural responsiveness. When teachers use a culturally responsive pedagogy, it entails using the cultural background, previous experiences, frames of reference, and performance approaches of ethnically diverse students so that learning is more pertinent and effective for them.

This concurrent mixed method study, in which quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed within the same analytical framework, explored the research questions related to cultural responsiveness in teachers and African American students' academic achievement in reading, as well as whether the African American students' perception of their teachers as culturally responsive impacts their achievement.

The instruments used in this study were surveys, and district and state assessments. Classroom observations and teacher interviews were also used to gather data.

It was found that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of students from the surveys of their teachers at School one and School two. However, there was a significant difference between the score for the MOY and the EOY for the students at the two schools. Culturally responsive pedagogy is a key component to helping African American students succeed in school. This pedagogy must be based on the nine dimensions of African American culture. These characteristics are best demonstrated through educational strategies that allow students to have a reason for, or give meaning to what they are learning. These strategies must be shared with teachers in order for them to be done correctly; therefore, it is imperative that teachers and school leaders receive professional development and training on how to implement these strategies. A culturally responsive pedagogy, effectively used by a caring teacher, can close the achievement gap and level the playing field for all students.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this record of study to my family. To my husband Adrian, for his love and support. To my children, Nicholas, Phillip, and Shannyn, and my granddaughter, Tori for their encouragement and love, and to my parents, Henry and Earnestine Wagner, for their example and their love.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

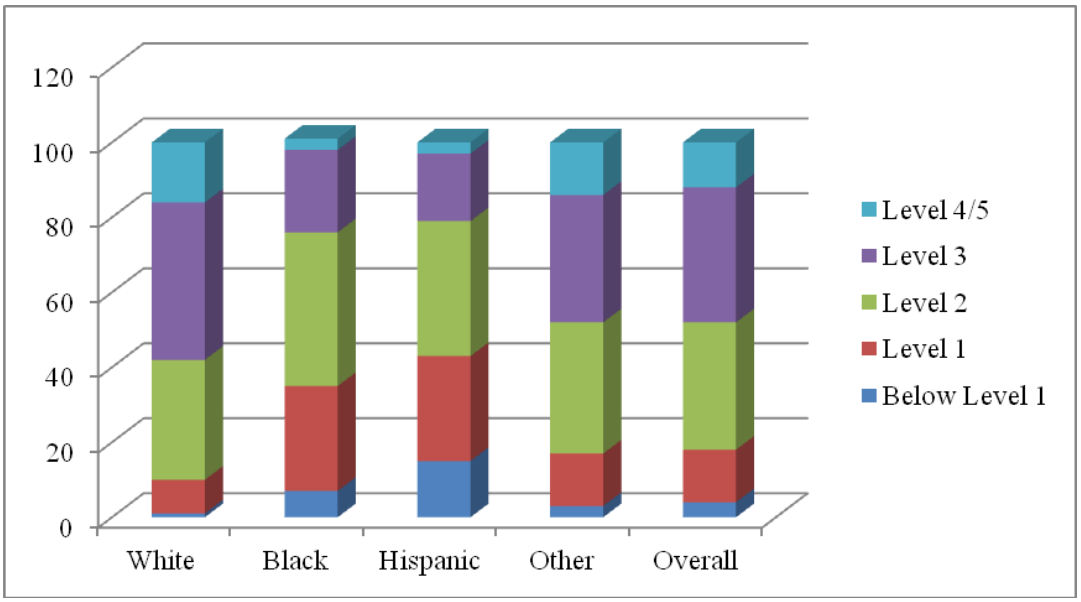
Culture has been defined in many ways, but the most prevalent definition is that people in the same culture share similar values, ideals, standards, customs, history, traditions, and institution of a group of people (Banks, Banks, & McGee, 1989; Ledrach, 1995; Li & Karakowsky, 2001). Cultural background has been found to have a powerful impact on students' educational experiences (Gay, 2010). In order for education to benefit all students, it must take into account the diverse and varied culture experienced by students. Too many times those in power make educational decisions for all students that may not directly benefit all students (Freire, 1970; Woodson, 1933). A cultural misunderstanding occurs when something the student or teacher says or does has a different meaning in the two cultures (Fish, 2010, 2013). Too many African American students end up in special education classes as a result of this cultural misunderstanding (Ford, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milofsky, 1974; Noguera, 2002), are underrepresented in gifted and talented classes (Ford, 2012; Naglieri & Ford, 2003), and too many poor and students of color receive a substandard education (Du Bois, 1935; Noguera, 2002). Teachers must be culturally responsive to their students so that African American and other culturally diverse students can be successful in school and in life (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Students who do not read proficiently by the third grade have a higher dropout rate and a lower graduation rate than students who were reading proficiently by the third

grade (Hernandez, 2011). Additionally the highest proportion of students who read below grade level are males, African Americans, or have spent time in foster care (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). And while it is important to focus on increasing reading proficiency in the early grades (Fiester, 2013), it is equally important that students of all levels are proficient readers. Nationally, approximately 32 million adults are functionally illiterate and cannot read (U.S. Department of Education, National Institute of Literacy, 2013).

A report completed by the National Center for Education Statistics showed that there is a large gap in academic reading achievement between African American and White students of more than 27 percentage points (NCES, 2013). Additionally, the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) completed a study of reading proficiency, where Level 1 is the lowest level of proficiency and Level 5 is the highest. African Americans and Hispanics have larger percentages at Below Level 1 and at Level 1 and smaller percentages at Level 4/5 than Whites or other groups. Figure 1 below shows the reading proficiency levels for students of color and White students in 2012 (NCES, 2012).

As the data in Figure 1 below show, approximately 70% of the African American and Hispanic students' scores were level 2 or lower, with only 30% of the scores being 3 and above. It also shows a little less than 5% of these students having a score of 4 or 5 reading level. This is compared to approximately 38% of the White students with scores at level 2 or lower and 62% scoring at a 3 reading level or above, with 22% having a score of 4 or 5.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013

Figure 1. U.S. Adults Age 16 to 65 at Each Level of Proficiency in Reading

A report completed by the National Center for Education Statistics showed that there is a large gap in academic reading achievement between African American and White students of more than 27 percentage points (NCES, 2013). Not only is reading an issue for college-going students of color, it is also an economic issue. Older students who cannot read are unable to compete in college and about half do not complete high school with their peers (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006).

A new strategy towards equity and cultural responsiveness must be used in order to eradicate the proficiency gap in the United States. Although some would disagree, providing a culturally responsive pedagogy for students benefits all students (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015), Students of color have difficulty getting successful jobs if their reading level is low. With the population of the United States becoming more diverse

(Brookings Institute, 2015; Department of Education, 2014;), it is critical that we educate this population well. Not only is it a moral imperative, with such large percentages of African American and other people of color becoming the new majority, it is an economic responsibility. There is still a large gap between Whites and African Americans and Whites and Hispanics, regarding education, poverty, and income (Frey, 2014). The advent of Black Lives Matter is one of the groups that has gained momentum because of the disparities in education, poverty, income, and treatment (Black Lives Matter, 2015). Closing the gap and providing educational and economic opportunities to all students is necessary in order to provide hope. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12 KJV).

Statement of the Problem and Purpose

The academic achievement of African American students has been discussed and considered to be a major concern of educators for many years (Fantuzzo, et al, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009; Taylor, 2012; Webb-Johnson, 2010; Woodson, 1933). The growing achievement gap between African American students and White students, especially in reading, continues to widen (National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2013). In a large urban school district in Texas for example, the achievement gap between African American and White students in the third grade on the most recent administration of the state assessment in reading was 25 percentage points, 26 points in grade six, and by the time the students reached their first End of Course exam (EOC) at the end of ninth grade, the gap had grown to 32 percentage points. The average score for

African American children passing the state assessment in reading in this school district was 33% versus 79% of White students passing the test. This represents a gap of 36 percentage points (Texas Education Agency (TEA) - AEIS 2013), and the problem was not exclusive to Texas. Data reviewed from the state assessment given in a large urban school system in Florida revealed a similar if not and equally disturbing gap between the average score for African American students (36%) and White students (76%) of 40 percentage points (FLDOE, 2013). Nationally, data of NAEP scores provided by the National Center for Education Statistics showed that from 2002 to 2013, the achievement gap between African American students and White students in reading had continually averaged more than 27 percentage points (NCES, 2013). One of the reasons provided to explain this gap in achievement was attributed to the cultural responsiveness of teachers (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Hanley & Noblit, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009). Cultural responsiveness has been linked to achievement, behavior, resilience, racial identity, classroom environment (safety), student engagement, and attendance (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to explore if there is a relationship between a teacher's cultural responsiveness and their third grade African American students' achievement, especially in reading. Additionally, I wanted to determine if African American students' perceptions of their teachers as culturally responsive was linked to their achievement and if teachers of African American students are effective or highly effective based on their level of cultural responsiveness. My assumption was that if a student feels as if the teacher understands their culture, and cares about them, the

students will do better academically and will be better able to learn (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009) I also assumed that highly effective and effective teachers are more culturally responsive than teachers who are considered ineffective or highly ineffective, mainly because part of their assessment is tied to how well the students do academically. Do students do better in school if they feel their teacher understands them and cares about them? This study identified the factors that affect the student's perception of their teacher as culturally responsive. Were there certain characteristics of or actions taken by a teacher that students perceived to be culturally responsive to them and their needs? Was student achievement higher for these teachers?

Another issue that was addressed here was how cultural responsiveness would be measured. In addition to reviewing the information provided by the students regarding their opinion of the teacher and how they thought the teacher felt about them, there were several things that I looked for as I observed the classroom to demonstrate what it looked like in actual practice. Gay (2010) demonstrates several ideas that identify a culturally responsive classroom and instructional practices. Culture counts. In other words, not only must teachers understand their own culture, but they must understand the culture of the students. This cultural understanding of the students should be demonstrated in the way the class is set up, the books used in the classroom, the posters and student work displayed in the room. A culturally responsive classroom should be set up to meet the needs of the students, especially in response to their cultural values. It should represent a community of learners who support one another (Ladson-Billings, 2009). A culturally responsive teacher should also have high expectations for student success and a culture

of caring (Gay, 2000, 2010, Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009). There should be a rigor. Classrooms should incorporate scaffolding and project-based learning, as well as, differentiated instruction which are all teaching strategies that can reach students of color, especially African American students. Therefore, I was looking for this type of evidence as I visited the classrooms. Cultural responsiveness would be measured by the teachers' responses to the survey as well as whether or not it was evident that the teachers cared about their students through their interactions with the students in class.

Research Questions

Three specific research questions were answered in my study:

1. What was the relationship between cultural responsiveness in teachers and their African American students' academic reading achievement?

2. How were the perceptions of African American students of their teachers being culturally responsive related to their reading achievement as measured by district approved assessment tests?

3. What was the relationship between a teacher being culturally responsive to students' needs and being identified as effective or highly effective?

Significance of the Study

This study made a significant contribution to the field. The issue of the achievement gap between African American students and other students in reading and other subjects is of such concern that it got the attention of the President of the United States. In July of 2012, President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order to create the first ever White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans. The

purpose of that initiative was to improve outcomes and educational opportunities for African Americans that could lead to an increase in high school graduation, college completion, and productive careers for these students (Educational Excellence for African Americans, 2012). The press release noted that some of the obstacles that prevent African American students from an equal opportunity to a quality education include: access to highly effective teachers and principals, school safety, lack of rigorous college-preparatory classes, and a disproportionate percentage of school discipline and special education referrals. High student discipline and special education referrals are key indicators of a lack of cultural understanding or responsiveness (Delpit, 2006; Ford, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milofsky, 1974; Neal, McCray, & Webb-Johnson, 2001; Noguera, 2002).

It is a national, state, and local problem that African American students are over represented in special education programs. Noguera states, "...schools that serve Black males fail to nurture, support, or protect them. In school, Black males are more likely to be labeled as behavior problems and less intelligent even while they are still very young. Black males are also more likely to be punished with severity, even for minor offenses, for violating school rules; often without regard for their welfare. They are more likely to be excluded from rigorous classes and prevented from accessing educational opportunities that might otherwise support and encourage them" (Naglieri & Ford, 2003; Noguera, 2002. para 12).

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law in 2001 required states to collect data on student achievement and disaggregate test scores by race and other demographic

and educational characteristics. The data highlighted in these scores demonstrated that African American students were lagging behind other groups in almost every subject, but especially in reading. There has been much public discussion about this problem, but the gap still exists and is growing wider each year (Noguera, 2012; Sankofa, et al, 2005). In 2012, Former Education Secretary Arne Duncan stated that he did not believe that schools in the United States would be able to help all children be proficient academically by the year 2014, a mandate of NCLB, a statement that was held to be true; the plight of African American students is worse than in previous years, proving that his fears were confirmed. Numerous studies have been published regarding cultural responsiveness and the impact that it has on the achievement gap, but each researcher admits that there is much more research needed to address the issue (Gay, 2010; Hill, 2012; Howard & Terry, 2011; Nichols, Rupley, & Webb-Johnson, Tlusty, 2000; Williams, 2015). This study extended the body of knowledge available on the impact of cultural responsiveness and student achievement and whether it was related to a teacher being considered effective or highly effective.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was culturally relevant pedagogy, tied to critical race theory. Culturally relevant pedagogy was coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1994. Ladson-Billings stated that there are three criteria that guide culturally relevant pedagogy - "(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order"

(p. 160). Culturally responsive pedagogy allows the school to incorporate the culture of the student's home and community with what they are learning in the classroom. Ladson-Billings believes that teachers should use cultural referents to teach students, using their culture as a bridge and an opportunity to value and recognize the student's own culture (Ladson-Billings, (2009). The culturally responsive teacher has developed the "personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that taken together, underlines effective cross-cultural teaching" (Diller & Moule, 2005, p. 2) that effectively serves students from diverse cultures. If a teacher understands and is culturally responsive to the African American culture, she/he is better able to support and guide the African American student and meet their needs (Ford, 2012).

National Education Association (NEA) considers cultural competence and/or cultural responsiveness to be the key factors in helping educators help students whose culture is different from their own. These educators are able to build on the cultural and community norms, while making students feel unique and important in their own right (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Pratt-Johnson, 2006). This theoretical framework of culturally responsive pedagogy was used to show whether there was a relationship between teachers who are culturally responsive and student academic achievement in reading. This frame was also used to examine student perception of their teacher's responsiveness. Additionally, this framework guided me to understanding the factors that students perceive teachers to demonstrate that make them culturally responsive and

demonstrate that they are using a culturally responsive pedagogy. The theoretical framework is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap

An achievement gap is the difference in academic performance between student groups and their peers (U. S. Department of Education, 2012).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the measure that holds schools, districts, and states accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. (ESEA, 1994)

African American

An African American is an American of Black African descent (Merriam Webster dictionary, 2013). African American is also a student group initially reported through No Child Left Behind (NCLB). and now through the newly enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is using the cultural background, previous experiences, frames of reference, and performance approaches of ethnically diverse students so that learning is more pertinent and effective for them (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2006; 2009).

Culture

Culture is the shared and similar values, ideals, standards, customs, history, traditions, and institution of a group of people (Banks, Banks, & McGee, 1989; Ledrach, 1995; Li & Karakowsky, 2001).

Focus Schools

Ten percent of Title I schools – not otherwise identified as a Priority school – are considered Focus schools. These schools include campuses with the widest gaps between reading and math performances of the federal student groups and safeguard targets of 75%. To exit Priority or Focus status, a school must make significant progress for two consecutive years following interventions and no longer fit the criteria to be identified as a Priority or Focus school. (Texas Education Agency, 2015; U. S. Department of Education, 2015)

Improvement Required (IR) Schools

IR designation is given to schools that had unacceptable performance in the previous year. These schools did not meet the targets on all required indexes for which they have performance data. The performance data are based on the following indexes for a high school - STAAR results, graduation rate, graduation diploma plan rate, and postsecondary indicator. Elementary and middle school performance data are based on the STAAR index only. (Texas Education Agency, 2015)

Persistently Lowest Performing Schools

Persistently Lowest Performing Schools are schools that do not meet state "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) goals for two or more years for their total student

populations and for specified demographic student groups, including major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, and students with disabilities (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2001)

Priority Schools

Schools that have been identified as among the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any non-Title I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria are considered to be Priority schools. This also includes Title I schools with graduation rates below 60%; and the lowest-performing Title I schools based on achievement results on reading/math safeguards at the All Student level (Texas Education Agency, 2015).

Problem of Practice

Problem of Practice is a dialogue, using data and other information of when students are not being successful on a campus that teachers and school leaders use to improve the educational outcomes for students that they currently don't know how to solve. It focuses on teaching and learning and the content begin addressed. It is observable and actionable. It impacts a broader strategy (school or school district), will make a significant difference to student learning, and involves deep learning (City, et. al, 2009).

Racial Uplift

Academic achievement rises when students are taught in "culturally familiar settings and have strong positive racial identities" (Hanley & Noblit, 2009, p. 5). It also supports home culture and is connected to an educational mission.

Resilience

Resilience is defined in the general sense, as the capacity to succeed and have positive results in life, despite being in conditions that present a challenge and could be considered intimidating (Garmezy & Masten, 1991). In the educational arena, resilience is defined as “the heightened likelihood" that the student will be successful in school and in life regardless of any adverse situations caused by traits, conditions, or previous experiences (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Resilience is the ability to recover from adversity (Hanley & Noblet, 2009).

Schools in Need of Improvement

Schools in Need of Improvement is a Title I school that does not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) as defined by the state for two consecutive years and receives specific consequences, such as, allowing students to transfer to another higher performing campus, receiving supplemental service, corrective action, or restructuring through closure, restart, transformation, or restructure (ESSA, 2014; NCLB, 2001).

Student Subgroups

Student subgroups are categories of students for which ESEA requires reporting and accountability, including students with disabilities, English Learners, low-income students, and students from major racial/ethnic groups: e.g., White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). They are sometimes referred to in this study as student groups, as I feel that the prefix "sub" could be interpreted to mean "less than."

Limitations

The study had the following limitations:

1. The data used in this study came directly from Texas Education Agency (TEA), National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), U.S. Department of Education, National Institute of Literacy, and the U.S. Census Bureau. This information could vary because of variations and frequency of reporting from these entities.

2. The information gathered for this study through surveys was a representative sample (Creswell, 2002) using an urban school district in Texas and the results may not be able to be generalized to every district in the country.

3. Many variables outside of my control could impact the study, including school leadership, additional resources, and parental involvement.

4. Only two classrooms were directly observed; therefore, the results may not be typical of the remaining third grade classrooms in the district or the country.

Delimitations

The delimitations that were listed in this study were set up to determine the perceptions of African American students of their teachers' cultural responsiveness. In order to do this, I sought out participants in a large urban school district because it had a large percentage of African American students. Additionally, a large percentage of the African American students in this district were not successful in reading. I analyzed the perceptions of African American students in third grade reading classes of their reading teacher, since in this grade reading is assessed for the first time annually by a state and national test. All of the identified students completed a perception survey of their

teachers, classrooms, and schools, and were evaluated using online reading assessments. Each survey was created based on the students' grade level/reading ability. The teacher participants could have been of any ethnicity, as long as they taught third grade. These particular teachers were African American, although one of them had a Spanish surname. The study took place over the course of four months. Two classrooms in predominantly African American schools, were observed. Although only two classrooms were observed, it allowed me to have first-hand experience with the participants and I was able to observe activities and behaviors in the classroom that are not always apparent from surveys (Creswell, 2003; Hays & Singh, 2012).

Assumptions

I made the following assumptions for this record of study: (a) the participating students who took the survey were truthful and accurate in their responses; (b) the participating students understood the words and ideas that were used on the survey regarding their teacher's cultural responsiveness; (c) the data collected measures the students' perceptions of their teachers' responsiveness to them in reading; (d) the data were accurately interpreted; and (e) the questions were closely correlated to cultural responsiveness.

Organization of the Study

The purpose of this record of study was to determine whether a culturally responsive teacher, using a culturally responsive pedagogy, influenced the academic reading achievement of African American children, especially those from economically challenged environments. The record of study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I

includes background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study.

Chapter II provided a review of the literature, which includes culturally relevant pedagogy theory, critical race theory, race in America, issues impacting African American achievement in reading from a historical perspective beginning with slavery through the Reconstruction and Civil Rights era to the current era. Chapter II also discusses issues such as disproportionality in special education and G/T classes and the disproportionate percentage of African American students receiving disciplinary infractions, it discusses equity in funding issues, and provides suggestions of strategies that teachers can use in order to help their students achieve success in the classroom. Chapter III describes the methods that were used in this record of study. It includes a description of how the participants were selected, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter IV presents the study's quantitative findings including the demographics of the participants, testing the research questions, confirmatory factor analysis, and results of the data analysis for the three research questions. Chapter V presents the study's qualitative findings including a description of what was seen in the classroom through observations, the themes that emerged from the findings, and the information gathered through informal interviews.

Chapter VI provides a summary of the full record of study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, recommendations for

future research, and conclusions. I also included strategies to use if you determine that you need to write grants to further support the pedagogy of teachers of students of color (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

This record of study provides an analysis of the cultural perspective of African American students and how a culturally responsive teacher could play a distinctive role in their academic success. It also analyzed how teachers view themselves and the role they feel that they have in the academic success of their African American students. I also identified whether or not these teachers scored as effective or highly effective (or not) on the teacher evaluation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Students in America have consistently fallen behind students of other countries for the last several decades (The Washington Post, December, 2013), currently scoring 26th out of 34 countries in math, 17th in reading, and 21st in science (PISA, 2012)). African American students are academically behind their White peers in reading and math (NAEP, 2009, 2013), which puts them at an even greater disadvantage internationally. Cultural responsiveness in teachers, or the lack thereof, has been identified as a primary reason for the wide achievement gap between African American and White students (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Noguera, 2012).

The cultural background of ethnic groups is so diverse and the divergent groups have varied experiences in education; therefore, the cultures tend to not understand one another and as a result, those groups not in power are more likely to suffer. Those in power who make educational decisions for all students tend to be White and come to their educational decision-making based on their own culture and background of what they perceive to be correct and true (Freire, 1970). For example, Milofsky (1974) and Noguera (2002) discussed the importance of teachers understanding the culture of their students in the educational process in order for their students to be successful. Too many African American students end up in special education classes as a result of this culture misunderstanding and too many poor students of color receive a substandard education (Blanchett, 2010; Sleeter, 2007). Noguera referenced the conference paper

entitled, "Of rocks and soft places: Using qualitative methods to investigate the processes that result in disproportionately," which was orally presented by Klingner and Moore at the Minority Issues in Special Education Conference at Harvard University. Nogurera (2002) stated that Klinger and Moore discussed why and how so many African American students end up in special education. These authors described how teachers must understand the culture of their students in order for African American and other students of color to be successful in school and in life (Harry, Klinger, Sturges, & Moore, 2002). The authors explained that rigor in the title is the "rock" and relevance is a "soft place," with rigor and relevance being tied to the soft place of assessments. They argued that assessments are subjective and influenced by several factors, including (a) the teachers' informal roles in the diagnosis; (b) how the school personnel feels about the families of the students; (c) if there are external factors that are influencing the identification;(d) the role teacher instruction and classroom management play in the classroom environment; (e) the idea that evaluation/IQ tests are geared toward middle and upper class White students; and (f) the types of instruments that are used to evaluate the students (Harry, et. al, 2002). The authors state that taking all of these factors into account demonstrates why there is an overrepresentation of African American students in special education.

The studies and articles discussed in this chapter will focus on African American students and race, the historical and current state of the education process for African Americans in this country, trends in America toward disproportionality and African American students, and the culturally-responsive pedagogy and resources that can help

African American students be successful in school; as well as a discussion as to whether these issues can influence closing the achievement gap.

Race in America

Race and class, but especially race, are such difficult topics to discuss in America (Anderson, 2016; Bai, 2010; Graves, 2011). Many people do not believe that America does not provide equal access to everyone. After all, America re-elected its first Black president. However, racism is alive and well in America (Cole, 2008; DiAngelo, 2016), as attested by the great divide in the country of those who wanted to "take their country back" and those other groups (poor, middle class, people of color, gay, liberal) who re-elected an African American President in the 2012 election. Additionally, the racism that has most recently reared its ugly head through violence towards African Americans, both male and female, and the #BlackLivesMatter movement, demonstrate that racism is as strong today as ever before. (CBS, 2015).

The topic of race in America is a very delicate one that has been reviewed and embraced by the oppressed (African American scholars) as a major issue, but has not had a substantive review by Whites, because many of them feel that racism towards people of color has been eradicated (DiAngelo, 2016). But, it is critically important to address race. Students in America are becoming more and more culturally and linguistically different (CLD), while the majority of teachers are mainly white and female (Education Week, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2016; U. S. Census, 2015). These same teachers who have had very little interaction with people of color, whether through friendships, as family members, or in school, feel as if racial segregation and

racism have ended. Robin DiAngelo (2016), in her book, *What Does It Mean to be White: Developing White Racial Literacy*, asks the critical question of what it is like to be White in a society that states that race is meaningless, even when the country is divided by race. As a White female who has spent a considerable amount of time researching racism in America and what can be done to challenge racial inequality, she is focused on increasing racial literacy for teachers and teaching them the importance of understanding the students' cultures.

Race must be addressed when using a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Since race must be addressed, it is closely tied CRP to critical race theory (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Racism between African Americans and Whites stems from the historical background of African Americans in society. Slavery's legacy haunts our society because it created the hierarchy of leadership from the beginning. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your High School History Textbook Got Wrong* (Loewen, 1995, 2007) discussed that slavery and everything that it stood for made it natural that in all things "the Whites be on top, Blacks on the bottom" (Loewen, 1995, Ch. 5). And although there may be times when African Americans have a decision-making role, the majority of decision-makers are White (DiAngelo, 2016; Greenberg, 2015). Dr. DiAngelo makes the point that since Whites constructed and dominate all significant institutions, their interests are rooted in the foundation of the U. S. society. Even if a White person is against racism, they still benefit because the system was created in their favor.

In the educational arena, books and the entire educational experiences are built around the expectations of Whites (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; DiAngelo, 2016; Hanley & Noblet, 2009). Textbooks and historical renderings show the history of America, for example, through the eyes of White citizens, which provides the message that they are more valuable than any other groups; it is important to tell their history. Researchers who have attempted to show that African American and other students of color can learn effectively, but perhaps may learn in a way most closely related to their culture (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Tatum, 2000), are many times not seen as the authority on the subject by those in power because of their race (Hanley & Noblit, 2009). Their viewpoint is seen as contrary to the dominant curricular viewpoint. In America, the authority on teaching and education has been in the domain of those in power.

It could be because the people who are in power do not understand the culture of others who are not like them; it could be that they feel that everyone should learn the same way. It could also be a not so subtle attempt to keep those in power, in power. School leaders (those in power) say with words that they want every child to succeed, but their actions and the achievement results of African American and other students of color speak louder than their words.

The systematic review of the literature in this study should help to establish that African American children, especially those that are economically-challenged and disenfranchised, can learn as well as or even better than the children of those in power, but they must be taught in ways that is culturally responsive and caring. The systematic review (Randolph, 2009) began with researching the topic of African American

achievement and culturally relevant pedagogy using online and library engine searches to determine the best sources that should be included in the study. Once I read those books and articles, I reviewed the books and articles that were referenced in the work, including those sources that were considered seminal work. Additionally, I read books that focused on this topic that are important contributions to understanding the concept of cultural responsiveness. As previously stated, this chapter will be organized in the following manner. The first section will provide an overview of the historical perspective of the education of African American children in America and the role it plays in the current views of educating children. Next will be an analysis of the cultural perspective of the group and how families and community play a distinctive part in African American heritage. Then, a review of the educational perspective will highlight current academic achievement of African American students and culturally responsive teaching strategies and suggested materials to approach teaching children of color, especially African American students. Finally, this chapter will review how the students' perception of the teacher as culturally responsive can affect their academic achievement.

Issues Impacting African American Achievement in Reading:

A Historical Perspective

Slavery Era

Once bound by slavery, African Americans have had a tenuous love affair with education and learning. During slavery, it was illegal for slaves to know how to read or to be taught to read by others, but they did everything they could to learn how to read (Mitchell, 2008; Williams, 2005). Eighteenth century laws were passed in Deep South

states such as South Carolina and Georgia restricting the teaching of reading and writing to African slaves. Anthony Mitchell (2008), in his article *Self-Emancipation and Slavery: An Examination of the African American's Quest for Literacy and Freedom,* described what life was like for slaves during and immediately after slavery, including laws set up to prevent slaves from being educated, and how important reading and learning were to the slaves. These laws were mainly enacted to keep slaves from communicating with one another in an attempt towards freedom. The following statement was included in a document in North Carolina regarding slaves learning to read or people teaching slaves to read, and still slaves looked for creative ways to learn:

> *"Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds and to produce insurrection and rebellion to the manifest injury of the citizens of this state: Therefore Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, that any free person who shall hereafter teach or attempt to teach any slave within this State to read or write, the use of figures excepted, Shall be liable to indictment in any court of record in the State having jurisdiction thereof, and upon conviction shall at the discretion of the court if a White man or woman be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than two hundred dollars or imprisoned and if a free person of colour shall be whipped at the discretion of the court not exceeding thirty nine lashes nor less than twenty lashes.*

> *Be it further enacted that if any slave shall hereafter teach or attempt to teach any other slave to read or write the use of figures excepted, he or she may be carried before any justice of the peace and on conviction thereof shall be sentenced to receive thirty nine lashes on his or her bare back." (*Legislative Papers, 1830–31 Session of the General Assembly).

Even knowing that these laws existed, and were consistent with laws across the country, African American slaves saw reading and education as a way to get out of slavery and bondage. Enslaved African Americans attended in secret, schools that were set up to help them advance, even though teaching an African American (slave) to read was illegal (Franklin and Moss, 2000; Zinn, 2000). Even so, at the end of slavery, only about 5% of the African American slave population had attained the ability to read and write (DuBois, 1962). Slavery also caused African Americans to be physically and psychologically controlled through mind games and tricks of the master, including personal inferiority because of skin color and facial and bodily features, total reliance upon those who claimed to be their masters or other authority figures, and denying African Americans the practice of their traditional culture. These issues still have some influence on African Americans today (Anderson, 1988; Mitchell, 2008).

Reconstruction Era

Once the institution of slavery ended, freed African Americans were concerned about their education and the education of their children; however, they were also confused about their new role in freedom. During the early days of freedom, the Northerners (carpetbaggers) worked to help set up schools for Negros, but when the

Southern planters returned to power in 1876, the expansion of schools for African American children were ceased. Additionally, education was so important to these newly freed African Americans that many community schools were set up by African Americans for their children. They paid for these schools in addition to being taxed for the schools their children could not attend that were for the White children only.

The Education of Blacks in the South: 1860-1935, Chapter 5 (Anderson, 1988) and *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South.* Ch. 1 (Walker, 1996) provide a view of what schools were like for African Americans after slavery. The oppression of African Americans and other people of color by the dominant group, is and was based on the institutional power of Whites in this country. As stated by Robin DiAngelo (2016, p. 62), "Oppression is the result of prejudice plus the power to enforce that prejudice throughout the culture. The prejudice becomes embedded in the very fabric of society, in institutions such as the media, family, religion, education, language, economics, and criminal justice, and in cultural definitions of what is normal, real, correct, beautiful, and valuable. This results in the systematic mistreatment of a targeted group."

This oppression is demonstrated in the views that were prevalent in America where people of color were considered to be genetically inferior and had lower levels of intellectual capacity than Whites, particularly those Whites who came from northwestern Europe. It is also demonstrated by lower expectations, especially for low income students of color (the teacher-student gap). This view of intelligence has historically

demonstrated why there is an achievement gap (Noguera, 2012). This oppression was apparent in the early schools and still influences education today.

Early Schools for African American Children

The earliest schools for African American children were church schools, which met a couple of hours each day (Anderson, 1988; Franking and Moss, 1994, 2000). Many of the Negro schools during the time immediately following the Civil War did not go beyond the eighth grade. There was little money for schooling for African American children and public school funds were diverted to schools for White children (Anderson, 1988; Walker, V.S. 1996). In the South, because money was so needed by their families, African American students were expected to work on the sharecrop farms to help out the family during harvest time. Even so, where schools were available, many Black families sacrificed the available child labor in exchange for the knowledge that their child was getting a much desired education (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 1996). Parents were allowing their children to go to school when available, according to Anderson (1988) and other historical accounts; therefore, White planters used their political influence to "restrict the availability of public schools for Black children."

In addition to ensuring that there was limited availability of area schools to African Americans, Southerners also: (a) refused to provide transportation for Black children; (b) used the funds received from taxes to build and provide upkeep to schools for White children, but would not use any of the funding to build Black schools; and (c) sent ill-prepared or inexperienced teachers to teach the African American children (Anderson, 1988). My own father shared explicit examples of how he lived this

experience during his education in the segregated South. He told us of how the school bus for the White students would turn around in front of his house to take the White students to school, but the African American students were not allowed to ride. He had to walk several miles to go to the school set up for the Negro children. He also talked about his eighth grade teacher telling him that he would have to go to another school, because she had taught him all that she could, having a seventh grade education herself.

Early schools for African Americans were dependent on the White-controlled state government for funding, many that did not want African Americans to become learned, thinking they would confront White authority and desire more than the types of jobs Whites felt they should have, such as working in the fields or as a domestic (Anderson, 1988; Mitchell, 2008; Walker, 1996). Black schools; therefore, did not receive as much financial support as did White schools. Black schools had fewer books, buildings in poor condition, with teachers being paid at a lower rate than teachers at White schools. African Americans were essentially double taxed, because several of them used their own money, land, and other resources (including time) to build schools for their children to attend (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 1994; Mitchell, 2008). Although transportation was provided for the majority of White students, Negro children were not allowed to ride their school bus and bus transportation was not provided to them (Walker, V.S., 1996), but the students walked, carpooled, and got to school the best way they could. The fact that these individuals were willing to do whatever it took was a testament to their desire to improve their state and evidence of their powerlessness regarding their oppression.

Civil Rights Era

By the Civil Rights period, the idea of progressive pedagogy was prevalent. Progressive pedagogy has its origins from John Dewey, considered the founder of progressive education. John Dewey described progressive education as a way to teach students so that what they are learning is linked to what they experience. During the Civil Rights era, Progressive pedagogy was based on a student-centered curriculum and was based on what the teachers were able to draw out from the students in terms of comprehension and expression of their experiences (Perlstein, 2002). *Minds Stayed on Freedom: Politics and Pedagogy in the African-American Freedom Struggle* (Perlstein, 2002), describes how African Americans were focused on "racial exclusion and oppression" and had great hope that progressive pedagogy would be the saving grace for African Americans. Segregation was also an impetus to create the "Freedom Schools." A slight variation of the progressive pedagogy, The Freedom Schools were designed to start where the students were, using examples of their everyday lives and experiences that allowed students to "build up to a more realistic view of the American society." The Freedom Schools were a part of a nationwide effort during the Civil Rights Movement to organize African Americans to achieve an equal footing socially, politically, and economically in the United States. Perlstein (2002) also described the pedagogical shift in the late 1960's to a more teacher-centered, traditional, and direct instruction focus, supported by the Black Panthers, when it was determined that students were learning less using the progressive teaching methods. Eventually, their thinking moved back towards the progressive thinking in order to teach the children "how to think" and not

"what to think." The Perlstein article articulates how politics played a strong role in the educational programs of African American children during the Civil Rights era.

Another viewpoint, provided in the Willie and Sanford (1991) article, *Martin Luther King Jr., the Civil Rights Movement, and Educational Reform* describes how influential the Civil Rights movement was under the guidance of Dr. King. This movement was responsible for educational policy development through peaceful means in which African Americans took the initiative to ensure change. It was noted that during the Civil Rights era, more African Americans and other minorities participated in the educational process, there was an increase in the graduation rate for African Americans, and more African Americans were going to college than ever before, including those enrolled in professional and graduate schools. This article also demonstrated the effectiveness of the oppressed being the ones that must make the change because they are most impacted by the change. Those who are the oppressors have less at stake and less interest in the success of the change.

During the Civil Rights era, several constitutional and legal issues were addressed. *Brown vs. Board of Education (1955)* overturned *Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896)* and declared that separate public schools for Black and White students were unconstitutional. Although this was a personal victory during the Civil Rights movement, *Brown* was not effectively carried out because those who were responsible for carrying out the ruling were school authorities, who were usually White. They had no real interest in initiating this change. As a result, there was no real change until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Franklin and Moss, 1994; Willie & Stanford, 1991). Shortly

afterwards came the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which provided support for children of low-income families, many of them Black.

Additional legislation was instituted during this time, including: (a) Economic Opportunity Act (1964), which provided college work study programs for students from low income families; (b) Health Professionals Educational Assistance Programs (1965), which authorized scholarships to low income students in health professions; and (c) Higher Education Act (1965), which provided student loans and graduate teacher training fellowships. The GI Bill (1944), created before the time frame most closely associated with the Civil Rights period, was a U.S. federal government-created legislation which included a comprehensive package of benefits, particularly financial assistance for entering higher education, including grants for school and college tuition, for veterans of U.S. military service of any class, race, or religion that was beneficial to many African Americans.

The time period between 1965 and 1975 was the most effective period for the educational attainment for minorities in the United States. During this time, Dr. King and others led African Americans to peacefully address the societal ills of the time. It was also noted that there were fewer changes during later years when there was less pressure by African American and other groups of color for change. Even so, more positive educational changes occurred during this time for people of color than ever before. So much so that those in power, who also operated and owned the media, began propaganda campaigns with the message that the educational system was mediocre and in a state of decline (Willie & Stanford, 1991). Racial uplift, demonstrated during this

period, has been attributed to the educational success of African Americans as well. Racial uplift is the idea instilled in youth that the reason to do well in school is so that they can be a benefit the community (Hanley & Noblit, 2009). Racial uplift was clearly tied to student achievement and was most successful in settings that built on students' culture and promoted their racial identities (Hanley & Noblit, 2009; Walker, 1996;). It was seen as a way to instill purpose and direction (Perry, 2003).

Willie and Sanford (1991) reiterated that those in power want to stay in power, and they tend to use the educational system to maintain their social standing, while those with no power tend to use the educational system to change or improve their social standing. Those in power described the system as failing when it began to benefit all. In 1987, Christine Sleeter's seminal work identified why those in power do not want students of color to excel. She describes the strategies put in place to continue to keep White students at the top of the educational chain. These strategies include the disproportionate number of African American students in special education classes, large percentages of African Americans being incarcerated, as well as low numbers of African American and other students in color in gifted and talented (G/T) programs, as well as, the implementation of tracking programs which included high percentages of students of color and low income students (Blankstein &Noguera, 2015; Losen & Orfield, 2002).

Current Era

This historical perspective has greatly affected the students of African American heritage, especially males, in several ways. First of all, even though there were great strides made during the Civil Rights era, the oppression, backsliding, and differences

made since then have caused huge changes in the attitudes, behaviors, and achievement of African Americans. In this instance, backsliding has been described as schools going back to the segregated way of operating through separated and differential treatment towards African Americans. The attitudes, behaviors, and achievement of African American students have been directly tied to their perception of high academic achievement as something that White people do and label high achieving African Americans as sell-outs or acting White (Fordham, 1999; Hanley & Noblit, 2009; Sankofa, et. al, 2005). When these students are unsuccessful in school, they many times develop negatives ideas of school, especially if the attitude of the teacher validates how they feel about school (Sankofa, et. al, 2005).

Jaynes and Williams (1989) in their book, *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society*, regarding a report provided by the Committee on the Status of Black Americans, discussed how prevalent and widespread it is to separate and treat differently African Americans, especially in elementary schools and schools of higher learning. Secondly, culture has not been addressed historically other than for a brief time during the progressive civil rights period of the early 1960s. Third, because those in power want to stay in power, they, therefore, will not make focused efforts to improve the plight of African Americans. There is not the same sense of urgency created during the Civil Rights era for peaceful change where African Americans took the initiative to change their own circumstance and did not wait for Whites to create equitable educational and human rights solutions for them. Finally, racial uplift is no longer a part of the education process for African American youth.

Issues Impacting African American Achievement in Reading

Academic Achievement of African American Students

In reviewing data regarding the academic achievement of students, African American students are lagging behind Whites and other students by large measures. In Texas, according to the 2014-2015 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), African American students lagged behind every other ethnic group in Texas in every area on the state assessment. In a large urban school district in Texas, the gap between Anglo and/or Asian American students and African American students on the state assessment shows a need to close and eventually eliminate the gap. There has to be a true desire for change. Pedro Noguera (2007) states, "This is why it is ultimately the beliefs of the educators that determines whether or not gaps in achievement close and all children learn. Whenever the educators refuse to blame others for low achievement or to make excuses for student failure but instead accept responsibility for their role, children benefit. Children know when they are taught by adults who care about them and who believe in them. They typically respond by displaying the qualities that are so essential to school success -- self-motivation, self-discipline and resilience."

Table 1 below demonstrates the depth of the gap in reading, not only for the current year, but for a previous testing year using the same test. The data show that there has been no positive change in the gap between African American students and the highest performing group. The data also show that in some cases, the gap has widened.

In every case in this district, African American students scored lower than every other ethnic group in the district.

Table 1

Percentage of Gaps in Reading by Ethnicity on the State Assessment

Large Urban LEA Test Area	Subgroup	SY 2012-13	Gap % Points	SY 2014-15	Gap % Points
Reading State Test (STAAR), Grade 3	**African American**	**66%**	**25.0%**	**60%**	**33%**
	Anglo American	91%		91%	2%
	Asian American	88%	3.0%	93%	
	Hispanic American	73%	18.0%	72%	21%
Reading State Test (STAAR), Grade 4	**African American**	**56%**	**32.0%**	**55%**	**39.0%**
	Anglo American	88%		91%	3%
	Asian American	87%	1.0%	94%	
	Hispanic American	63%	25.0%	62%	32%
Reading State Test (STAAR), Grade 5	**African American**	**67%**	**24.0%**	**74%**	**23%**
	Anglo American	91%		95%	2%
	Asian American	87%	4.0%	97%	
	Hispanic American	68%	23.0%	78%	19%
Reading State Test (STAAR), Grade 6	**African American**	62%	26.0%	**59%**	**34%**
	Anglo American	88%		92%	1%
	Asian American	87%	1.0%	93%	
	Hispanic American	**60%**	**28.0%**	64%	29%
Reading State Test (STAAR), Grade 7	**African American**	71%	20.0%	**61%**	**30%**
	Anglo American	91%		91%	
	Asian American	90%	1.0%	88%	3%
	Hispanic American	**68%**	**23.0%**	68%	23%
Reading State Test (STAAR), Grade 8	**African American**	**74%**	**20.0%**	**77%**	**19%**
	Anglo American	94%		96%	
	Asian American	86%	11.0%	91%	5%
	Hispanic American	76%	18.0%	80%	11%
Reading English (I) State Test End of Course (EOC) exam, Grade 9	**African American**	**54%**	**32.0%**	**54%**	**29%**
	Anglo American	86%		83%	
	Asian American	76%	10.0%	82%	1%
	Hispanic American	56%	30.0%	58%	25%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), AEIS 2013; TEA TAPR, 2015

Percentage of students by ethnic group who passed the STAAR test and the gap for the students compared to the highest performing ethnic group – Anglo and/or Asian American

As the data show, in 2015 the gap between African American and White student achievement in reading was at its widest point in 4th grade and the EOC metric in ninth grade at 39 percentage points. Additionally, African American students scored lower than every ethnic group on almost all grade levels in the district. Hispanics scored lower at two grades levels, 6th and 7th in 2012-13, but surpassed African American students on all tests on the 2014-15 STAAR assessment.

In the data below, African American and Hispanic students did not meet standard in reading, while White and Asian students did. Additionally, African American students were the only group that did not meet standard in math. Met standard is used by the state to assess how well students are doing on assessments in reading, math, and one other measure, usually attendance or graduation rates (TEA, 2013). Currently, TEA uses the designation of Improvement Required (IR) to show a need for improvement at the school and district level.

Table 2

Met Standard 2015 Accountability System

Met Standard Indicator	All Students	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian
Reading/ELA	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Math	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Graduation	81.6%	79.2%	80.6%	91.7%	88.3%
Attendance	95.7%	94.5%	96%	96.3%	97.7%
Dropout	3.1%	3.9%	3.0%	1.7%	1%

Source: TEA: Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) 2014 - 2015

Nationally, the numbers are not any better. Alan Vanneman, et. al. (2009) completed a study through the *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)* that analyzed the gaps and trends of students' educational achievement, with a particular focus on African American and White students. The study, entitled *Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress*, revealed that most recently, although the African American/White achievement gap is closing, African Americans are still behind. The study used data from 2007, but indicated that 4th grade African American students were 26 points behind and 8th grade African American students were 31 points behind White students in math. The gaps in reading were 24 points for grade 4 and 26 points at 8th grade between African American and White students. The report continued to review scores by state, gender, and socio-economic status. This report was significant in that it helped guide policy.

African American Students in Special Education and Special Programs

Attributed to cultural misunderstanding has been the large percentage of African American students placed in special education. Donna Ford (2012) in her article entitled, *Culturally Different Students in Special Education: Looking Backward to Move Forward*, looks at the demographics in schools, especially in the area of special education and notes that African American, Hispanic, and English Language Learners (ELL) students (referred to as racially, ethnically, and linguistically different - RELD students) are overrepresented in special education classes. Dr. Ford also analyzed gifted and talented (G/T) programs in this large urban school district and determined that African American

students were grossly underrepresented in the G/T program. She surmised that this may be caused by cultural misunderstandings. Since the majority of teachers are increasingly White and female, cultural differences, especially related to "values, beliefs, attitudes, customs, and traditions" give way to low expectations, misunderstandings, deficit thinking , and cultural clashes. In "Are schools ready for Joshua? Dimensions of African American culture among students identified as having behavioral/emotional disorders, Dr. Webb-Johnson (2010) highlights the fact that African American students are overrepresented in special education classes, especially labeled with behavior/emotional disorders than any other ethnic group. Her research showed how students in behavior/emotional disorder classes, demonstrated the dimensions of African American culture, and used coping strategies to stay in the class, but were not academically engaged in the lessons because the teachers were unable to reach them

Currently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that states identify students by race, ethnicity, and disability, as well as disaggregate the data to identify the proportion of students by race and ethnicity that were suspended and expelled. Most importantly, the IDEA identifies the disproportionality and overrepresentation of racial and ethnic groups placed in special education (IDEA, 2004). Disproportionality has to do with the overrepresentation of students in special education or any deficit area as compared to the percentage of students enrolled in school at the time (Blanchett, 2006). Overwhelmingly, African American students, especially males, have been disproportionately identified and overrepresented in special education classes

(Codrington & Fairchild, 2012; Ford, 2012; Noguera, 2002; Oswald, Coutinho, & Best, 2002; Parrish, 2002).

The state of Texas has created a methodology for calculating disproportionality to the federal government that allows some school districts with smaller enrollments to be exempt from reporting their data (TEA, 2013). The most recent data reported to the federal government from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) regarding the percentage of students in special education classes identify African American students with disabilities as 17.1%, but the African American enrollment was 12.9% of the state's population (TEA, Texas 2012). As shown in Table 3 below, other races were proportionately represented relative to their state enrollment, whereas African American students were overrepresented.

Table 3

Percentage of Students Placed in Special Education by Ethnicity

Disability Category	Hisp.	Afr. Amer.	White	Asian	Amer. Indian	Pacific Islander	Two or more	All Races/ Ethnicity
% All students	49.3	12.9	32.1	3.5	0.5	0.1	1.6	100
% All disabilities	47.7	17.1	31.4	1.5	0.5	0.1	1.6	100

Source: http://www.ideadata.org; http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/; Ed.gov: Texas (2012)

One of the main strategies listed by TEA to address disproportionality of African American students in special education includes the "implementation of research-based approaches within culturally-responsive educational systems" (TEA, Region 1). Other strategies include: (a) culturally responsive teaching, (b) parent involvement; (c)

response to intervention; (d) systems of support teams; (e) positive behavior supports; (f) appropriate referrals; and (g) appropriate decision making by the multidisciplinary team.

In this same large school district in 2015, African American students comprised 39% of students in the special education program labeled with an intellectual disability and yet they are less than 25% of the student population. Additionally, the percent of African American students identified with emotional disturbance was 53% in 2015; although it was decreased from 57% in 2010 (District Research and Accountability report, 2015). From 2010–2015, a higher percentage of African American students with disabilities were placed in a resource or self-contained instructional setting compared to their Hispanic and White peers. Table 4 below shows how the disproportionality within the district is startling and must be corrected through training and professional development for teachers and leaders.

Table 4

Percentages of Students by Demographic Group in Special Education by Type

Students by Ethnicity	District Enrollment	Students with Disabilities	Learning Disability	Emotional Disturbance	Intellectual Disability	Autism
African American	24.9%	33.1%	43.1%	53%	39%	8.3%
Asian American	3.7%	1.2%	*	0%	1%	*
European American	8.2%	7.4%	18.9%	11%	5%	17%
Hispanic American	62.1%	57%	44.4%	34%	54%	9.7%
Other	1.1%	1.3%	*	2%	1%	*

Source: District and School Profiles 2014-15; Special Education Program: Identification, Placement, and Assessment Report, 2014-2015. *Other includes Asian, other ethnic groups, and two or more races. The numbers were too small and were masked or included in the larger group.

The difference between a learning disability and an intellectual disability is that an intellectual disability, most recently called mental retardation, is defined as having a significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, usually two standard deviations below the mean (i.e. having an I.Q. of 70 or below), which usually affects both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior (aaidd, 2013). A learning disability has been defined as " specific kinds of learning problems that cause a person to have difficulty acquiring certain skills," "is used to describe the seeming unexplained and unexpected difficulty a person has in acquiring basic academic skills," or " is a disorder in one or more of the basic cognitive abilities involved in understanding or using spoken or written language." These statements were made by "experts" through PBS.org regarding what these disabilities are (pbs.org).

It is interesting to note the disproportionality in special education. Although the District has reduced the percentage of students in special education overall to 7.5%, the District has been cited by TEA as "Needs Assistance" because of the percentage of African American students in every major category by type in special education except for autism or other specific needs that are identified medically. The items listed in Table 4 above could be subjective, because the students are placed in these categories based on the recommendation of the teacher, counselor, or principal. Another area within the district that has been cited has been the Gifted and Talented (G/T) program. Dr. Donna Ford came to the District in June 2015 to speak to the board and superintendent about the disproportionality of the students in the G/T programs.

According to Ford and the data, there is a strong need to increase the percentage of African American students in G/T. In Table 5 below, the percentages identified the percentages of the students who are enrolled in and are served by the Gifted Education Program in the district. Currently, 7.7 % of the G/T program includes African American students; whereas 24.9% of the district's enrollment is African American. Approximately 62% of the district is comprised of Hispanic American students, but they only make up 15% of G/T student enrollment. In contrast, 8.2% of the district's enrollment is European American or White, but 36% of the students enrolled in G/T are White.

Table 5

Students in G/T in Current School District

Students by Ethnicity	District Enrollment	Students Enrolled in G/T
African American	24.9%	7.7%
Asian American	3.7%	45.2%
European American	8.2%	36.0%
Hispanic American	62.1%	15.4%
American Indian	0.2%	14.8%
Other	0.9%	35.9%

Source: Power point - Examination of School District 2013 - 2014 Gifted Education Data - Dr. Donna Ford; District and School Profiles 2014-15

According to Ford, using the 20% rule for African American [Percentage of Black students in the district (P) x 20% = B]: Equity goal (E) = P - B and Hispanic students [Percentage of Hispanic students in the district (P) x 20% = H]: Equity goal (E) = P - H, will cause greater equity within the country. An example of the equity rule for one of the groups would be as follows: If the percentage of African American students in

the district is 26%, the calculation would be: 26% x 20% = 5.2%. Equity rule = 26% - 5.2% = 20.8%. Based on the equity rule and the percentages of students by ethnicity enrolled in G/T, it demonstrated that there was a disproportionality toward African American and Hispanic students, with both being underrepresented in G/T.

African American Student Discipline

In addition to the lack of cultural responsiveness contributing to the overrepresentation of African American students in special education classes, higher percentages of African American students receive discipline referrals and harsher treatments (Appleseed, 2007; Cole, 2008; Irvine, 1990; Noguera, 2012). Milner (2012) highlighted how students may react to or behave in a certain way in difficult situations which may be foreign to the teacher. Milner stated that the teacher may react negatively to the student's behavior because he or she may not understand why the student is behaving as he or she is. Depending on the situation, the way the student perceives the teacher is treating him or her, and how the student has learned to handle difficulties at home may explain how the student behaves in class (Webb-Johnson, 2010). Table 6 below highlights the student discipline percentages in a large urban school district in Texas. The percentage of African American students cited for disciplinary infractions is disproportionately higher than White students as compared to the enrollment. In the first section of Table 6, the percentage of African American students enrolled is 25.8%, but 50% of the infractions that resulted in out-of-school suspensions were given to African American students; White students represent 8% of the enrollment and 1% of out-of-school suspensions. Other discipline measures listed below show similar patterns.

Table 6

Number and Percentage of Students Impacted by Discipline Issues

Disciplinary Issues			
	Out-of-School Suspensions		
Student populations	Number of Students Impacted	Percentage of Infractions	Percentage of Enrollment
African American	18,204	50%	25.8%
Anglo American	1,092	1%	8.0%
Asian American	147	1%	3.3%
Hispanic American	16,897	46%	61.8%
	In-School Suspensions		
Student populations	Number of Students Impacted	Percentage of Infractions	Percentage of Enrollment
African American	16,208	32%	25.8%
Anglo American	1,393	1%	8.0%
Asian American	331	1%	3.3%
Hispanic American	32,691	64%	61.8%
	DAEP Placements		
Student populations	Number of Students Impacted	Percentage	Percentage of Enrollment
African American	1,434	43%	25.8%
Anglo American	87	1%	8.0%
Asian American	N/A	0%	3.3%
Hispanic American	1,818	54%	61.8%
4,836 HISD Referrals to Harris County Juvenile Probation Department			
Student populations	Number of Students Impacted	Percentage of Referrals	Percentage of Enrollment
African American	2,498	52%	24.9%
Anglo American	706	15%	8.2%
Asian American	27	>1%	3.6%
Hispanic American	1,605	33%	62.1%

Source: TEA, District Level Annual Discipline Summary, PEIMS Discipline Data for 2011-2012. Harris County Juvenile Probation Department (HCJPD), 2014. Counts of less than 5 and greater than 0 are masked with the value "N/A" to comply with FERPA.

When the teacher does not know how to handle or redirect the student's behavior, the student may be sent to the office (Cole, 2008; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Obidah & Teel, 2001). When the student has to go to the office to see the disciplinary authority,

the teacher continues to teach the rest of the class, the student misses instruction, and the gap widens.

Cultural Characteristics or Dimensions of the African American Learner

What does the literature say about the importance of understanding cultural differences regarding children of color? When teachers understand African American culture, they can become more culturally responsive and meet the needs of African American students (Cole, 2008; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009). Boykin (1983) and Ford (2012), along with Shade, Kelly & Oberg (1997), *Creating Culturally Sensitive Classrooms*, detailed nine learning characteristics of African American students. These are (a) spirituality - a belief in a higher power; (b) harmony - tied into respecting surroundings; (c) affect - emotional expressiveness; (d) communalism - as social beings; (e) movement - preference toward active learning; (f) verve - easily bored with routine; (g) expressive individualism - having a unique style; (h) orality - oral or verbal; likes to talk; and (i) social time orientation - focus on events rather than time.

Likewise, other researchers have tied the beliefs and practices of African American culture to African culture (Hanley and Noblit, 2009). This culture is based around: (a) spirituality - based on the belief that all elements of the universe are of one substance, or spirit; (b) resilience - the conscious need to bounce back from disappointment and disaster and to have tools of humor and joy to renew life's energy; (c) humanism - describes the African view that the whole world is vitalistic, or alive, and that this vitality is grounded in a sense of goodness; (d) communalism - denotes awareness of the interdependence of people. One acts in accordance with the notion that

the duty to one's family and social group is more important than individual privileges and rights. (e) orality and verbal expressiveness - refer to the special importance attached to knowledge that is passed on through word of mouth and the cultivation of oral virtuosity; (f) personal style and ubiqueness - refer to the cultivation of a unique or distinctive personality or essence and putting one's own brand on activity — a concern with style more than being correct or efficient. It implies approaching life as if it were an artistic endeavor; (g) realness -refers to the need to face life the way it is without pretense; (h) emotional vitality - expresses a sense of aliveness, animation and openness conveyed in the language, oral literature, song, dance, body language, folk poetry, and expressive thought; and (i) musicality and rhythm - demonstrates the connectedness of movement, music, dance, percussiveness and rhythm, personified through the musical beat (p. 26). These are in comparison to the cultural characteristics of Whites where individualism, uniqueness, and universalism are cherished (DiAngelo, 2016).

Many times, if educators are unaware of cultural differences, they may feel that the student is slow or needs additional supports through special education. For example, the characteristic of movement could be misinterpreted to mean hyperactive and the orality characteristic may come across as argumentative or rude. Gloria Ladson-Billings in her article *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (1995) suggested that educational practices should match the children's culture. She does not support going as far as the Ebonics episode in American educational history, but does suggest that teachers must care about their students and their welfare, do what is right for students, and be able to help them incorporate and understand the importance of education in their

daily lives. She described the teachers as being a part of the community, whether they lived there or not, where they made a conscientious decision to do something in the community to prove they felt it was a worthwhile place to be. She also states that the classrooms of culturally responsive teachers were collaborative rather than competitive and teachers should use scaffolding to facilitate learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2009).

It is important for instructional leaders to understand the necessity of creating culturally responsive classrooms in culturally responsive schools. No longer can the plight of these students of color be ignored. It is well documented that the student population will soon be more students of color than White students (NCES, 2015; Huffington Post). In the next ten to twenty years, these students will be the new leadership in America. At the rate and quality that we are educating students of color, who will lead us?

Parent and Community Connections

Bridges, Awakoya, and Messano (2012) completed a study for the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) entitled *Done to Us, Not With Us: African American Parent Perceptions of K-12 Education*, and discussed what parents think of the educational system. It has been noted that parental involvement is extremely important to facilitating student success and achievement. What do parents of African American students see as their role in the process, especially for low income students? The following key findings were noted: (a) parents felt it was very important for their children to attend and graduate from college; (b) parents felt they did not have access to reliable information regarding their child's education; (c) parents want school choice, but

felt that having to send their child to a school outside of the community presented a challenge; (d) parents did not react positively to the term "school reform" and many of them did not have consensus on what was meant by the term; and (e) parents felt they had a "degree of personal power" at their child's school, but felt they had no power within the school system as a whole. The article went on to say that more African American parents, organizations, and community leaders need to get involved in education in order to see change. The church and parents themselves were seen as the most influential and trustworthy sources of supporting parents in the education system. This information is important, because the educators need to understand the importance of the family and spirituality in the culture of the African American community.

Spirituality, identified as one of the primary characteristics or dimensions in the African American culture, is one of the most predominant features that guides the collective group of many who identify as African American. Although spirituality may lead one to think of the church culture, although that is part of it, spirituality is much more than that. It intertwines itself into the nine characteristics previously described that make up the African American culture (Boykin, 1983). Additionally, other cultures, many that came to America to realize the American dream, have continued to hold on to their culture, but according to Ford, because African Americans came to America in chains and were distanced from their African roots, they are considered "acultural." African Americans do not have a real connection to Africa; whereas, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans have a culture that is noted and discussed (CNPAAEMI, 2009).

Many times, a "colorblind philosophy" is applied to African Americans, especially by teachers who state they do not see color (Tatum, 1997).

Culturally Responsive Classrooms and Schools

Michael Dantley (2005) in his article entitled, *African American Spirituality and Cornel West's Notions of Prophetic Pragmatism: Restructuring Educational Leadership in American Urban Schools,* highlighted the purpose of schools that serve majority African American students to be a place where learning is aligned to the solving of problems and situations, and learning has a purpose that goes beyond teaching to the test in order for the students to pass state proficiency examinations. Dantley (2005) in agreement with Cornel West stated that classrooms should "encourage discourse, problem-based projects, and critical pedagogical practice" (Dantley, 2005, p. 659), and that students should see how what they are learning fits into the broader meaning of community and how they can collaboratively meet community needs and bring about societal change and reform, which is closely tied to racial uplift. Linda Darling-Hammond (1997), in her book, *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work,* concurred that schools should be strongly connected to families and communities in order to increase the academic achievement of students. She went on to explain that in order to create schools that work, learning opportunities must be created that allow students to work in ways that sustain their need for belonging and relationships, while giving them a sense of independence (two of the nine characteristics listed as being part of the culture of African American children). She felt that the

curriculum should be used in a manner that allows students to interact socially and show initiative in multiple ways.

This message is continued through the work of the Association for Supervision and Cultural Development (ASCD). Their book, *Educating Everybody's Children*, details a long list of strategies, which if implemented well, will lead to high student academic achievement. Some of these strategies include: modeling behavior, implementing hands on problem-based learning, using interdisciplinary teaching, and including technology as a strategy (Cole, 2008).

In order to advance the academic success of the students in the school, it is incumbent upon the principal, as the instructional leader of the school, to ensure that the proper evidence-based pedagogical strategies are used to increase the academic achievement of all students, including students of color. For example, developing teachers' skill base in the use of project-based learning, scaffolding, and differentiated instruction is invaluable to African American students because these strategies can allow for almost all of the cultural values from the African American culture to be infused in what is being taught.

Effective Strategies for Increasing African American Student Achievement

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a teaching method that allows students, to gain knowledge and skills usually in collaborative teams for an extended period of time, to research and report on engaging and complex questions, problems, or challenges. Project-based learning allows for personalization of the learning environment and engagement for students from different cultures. Effective PBL should focus on rigor,

aligned to college- and career-ready standards. Studies have shown that rigor improves student achievement (Gray, 2008). There are several critical components of PBL that should be incorporated into the strategy in order to ensure effectiveness *(*Larmer et al, 2015) *that are directly tied to* cultural values of African Americans. These components are: (a) Key Knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills - focused on student learning goals, standards-based content, and skills such as critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration, and self-management *(spirituality)*; (b) Challenging Problem or Question - engaging problem to solve or a question to answer, at the appropriate level *(verve)*; (c) Sustained Inquiry - rigorous, extended opportunity to ask questions, find answers, and apply what was learned *(movement)*; (d) Authenticity - Allows real-world activities that are of interest to the students *(expressive individualism)*; (e) Student Voice & Choice - Students have a say about the project they chose and how they create the final product *(harmony, affect)*; (f) Reflection - Students and teachers reflect on what they learned and the effectiveness and quality of the project, including challenges and how to overcome them *(affect)*; (g) Critique & Revision - Students give, receive, and use feedback to improve their product *(orality)*; (h) Public Product - Students report on their findings by explaining, displaying and/or presenting it to people outside of the classroom *(orality; expressive individualism)*; and (i) 21st Century Skills - Allows the use of technology and collaboration with peers *(communalism, verve, social time orientation)*. Project-based learning allows students to have an opportunity to apply, deepen, and extend learning, as well as develop 21st century skills that will make them college and

career ready. These components are closely tied to the dimensions of African American culture.

This strategy is appropriate for faculty because it is extremely effective in reaching African American students, although many teachers do not understand the best way to approach teaching this way. Teachers should understand how to draw the best, most rigorous work out of the students as well as ensure that all students are contributing to the project; therefore professional development and training are necessary**.**

Scaffolding is another evidence-based pedagogical strategy that should be used to increase the academic achievement of all students, including students of color. Sometimes called building bridges, scaffolding helps students to improve because it meets them where they are (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Scaffolding is important for these students of color because it allows them to feel successful in what they currently know and helps the students build connections to new information. Scaffolding can help build confidence in the students as they are learning new material. Gay (2010) argues that teachers of students of color need to understand the students, what they know, and how they learn. Once the teacher understands the learning styles of the student, he/she will be better able to reach them and improve achievement.

Matching the teaching style with the diverse learning styles, referred to as "cultural congruence" (Gay, p. 174) is an important component of scaffolding. It is important to note that scaffolding in education, like scaffolding in construction is needed while the student is being introduced to new information. Once the student masters the

information, the supports used to help the student get to that point are removed. The purpose of scaffolding is to eventually create independent learners (Larkin, 2002).

There are several reasons why scaffolding is effective for all students, but especially students of color. These include: (a) students learn information easier when it is connected to what they already know; (b) students retain the new information learned longer when it is connected to a familiar frame of reference; (c) student engagement and mastery increases because the new information feels less new when it is connected to something the student already knows and is less intimidating; and (d) teachers are forced to understand how their students learn (Gay, 2010; Howard & Terry, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Other examples of what constitutes scaffolding include modeling, thinking aloud, and students helping each other. Additionally, scaffolding supports include graphic organizers, templates, and guides (Larkin, 2002). It is important for teachers to be properly trained in how to incorporate scaffolding as a teaching strategy because, although it is a great benefit to children, if used improperly, it can be difficult to do. Teachers have to be cognizant of the students' uniqueness and educational needs. The teacher must be prepared to incorporate different scaffolding strategies in the classroom; therefore, it can be time consuming. Teachers also must be extremely knowledgeable of the curriculum in order for scaffolding to greatly benefit the students, so professional development in the subject that they teach is also critical and goes hand in hand with scaffolding.

Differentiated Instruction. The final evidence-based pedagogical strategy discussed here that should be used to increase the academic achievement of all students, especially students of color is differentiated instruction, which supports personalized learning. This method is effective because it allows students to learn based on their readiness level, interests, and preferred way of learning (Littky, 2015). As with scaffolding, teachers must understand who the students are, what they know, and how they learn. Differentiated instruction, key word being instruction, means that the teachers must be well versed in the curriculum and have a clear understanding of the course and different strategies needed to help students achieve to their maximum ability; therefore, professional development in the teacher's subject matter is also an important component to professional development in the effective use of differentiated instruction. Teachers who differentiate instruction know that students are different. Students come to their teachers with different knowledge, experiences, and interests, different levels of readiness, different languages and culture, and they learn differently (Gay, 2000, 2010). If properly used, differentiated instruction can support the values of the African American culture in that it can support verve, expressive individualism, and harmony.

Ethic of Care

A very critical part to all of these components is the ethic of care. Though this ethic cannot be taught, per se, it can be explained. Teachers who want to make a difference in the lives of students will demonstrate the characteristics of caring to the students. Additionally, caring does not mean lowering standards or allowing students to do less, it actually means ensuring that the rigor is there and that students have an

opportunity to learn where they are, and be treated as competent beings (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Gay, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2010).

Research continues to speak of caring as being one of the most compelling aspects of student achievement for African American students (Gay, 2010; Howard & Terry, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2009). As a culturally responsive leader, it would be imperative for teachers to use these strategies to ensure success for their students. These scientifically research-based strategies, proven to work with students of color, especially African American students, should be used if there is any intent to improve the lives of African Americans. They have been proven to work. The only excuse for not using strategies that work for these students is because they do not care enough to make a difference; therefore, school leaders must ensure that teachers demonstrate caring towards their students.

Other Issues Impacting African American Achievement in Reading

Inequities in Education - Economic Factors

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006; 2009) addressed the significance of the achievement gap in U.S. schools. She questions why, if research continues to show that there are gaps, as attested to by the studies of the NCES and others, are factors such as race and class still indicators of achievement? Her research contends that if the "education debt" is dealt with, the achievement gap will close. She also provides evidence that not only Black children, but Native American and Hispanic children should also be included in the education debt as they have also been deprived of basic rights and privileges by those in power. Historically, these groups have been deprived,

and in looking at more recent trends, the funding allocated for majority White communities exceeds that in poor and communities of color often times by twice the amount and schools are becoming increasingly desegregated (Kozol, 2005). Ladson-Billings addresses the debt from different points of view, from the historical debt to the moral debt, and emphasizes why this debt must be addressed. She contends that schools must be desegregated and equitably funded so that the achievement gap can be closed. The educational debt is included here because it is tied to the student's self-worth and the value that institutions continue to demonstrate to African American youth in America. Not only are the oldest school buildings many times found in the African American communities, but the more affluent, traditionally White parents, can afford to supplement the education that their child is receiving.

In an analysis that I completed regarding funding equity within the district, it was noted as expected, that schools with student from high income communities received not only the allotted funds from the school district, but significant amounts of funding through donations and gifts. An analysis of the data for the last three years (2012 - 2013; 2013 - 2014; 2014 - 2015) identifies the average free and reduced meals (FARM) prices of the schools that received donations by Trustee (board member) area and the amount of funding through donations they received. These donations came from charitable organizations, including local companies, parent-teacher associations and organizations (PTA/PTOs), and from direct parent donations to the school. The donations were used to fund after school programs, libraries, playground equipment, field trips, and other activities that students from schools in high poverty communities

were not receiving. The majority of funding to the schools in the high poverty communities were donations, many of them in the form of food through the 'Backpack Buddy' Food Bank program.

Table 7

Schools That Received Donations by School Board Trustee Area 2012 - 2015

Board Trustee Area	FARM 2012 - 13	FARM 2013 - 14	FARM 2014 - 15
District I	73%	77%	81%
District II	82%	83%	88%
District III	**95%**	**92%**	**94%**
District IV	79%	80%	86%
District V	49%	61%	66%
District VI	78%	79%	73%
District VII	84%	77%	59%
District VIII	80%	80%	86%
District IX	**89%**	**89%**	**92%**

Source - Research and Accountability, 2012 - 13, 2013 - 14; 2014-15; Grant Department records of donations, 2015. Free and Reduced Priced Meals (FARM)

Table 8

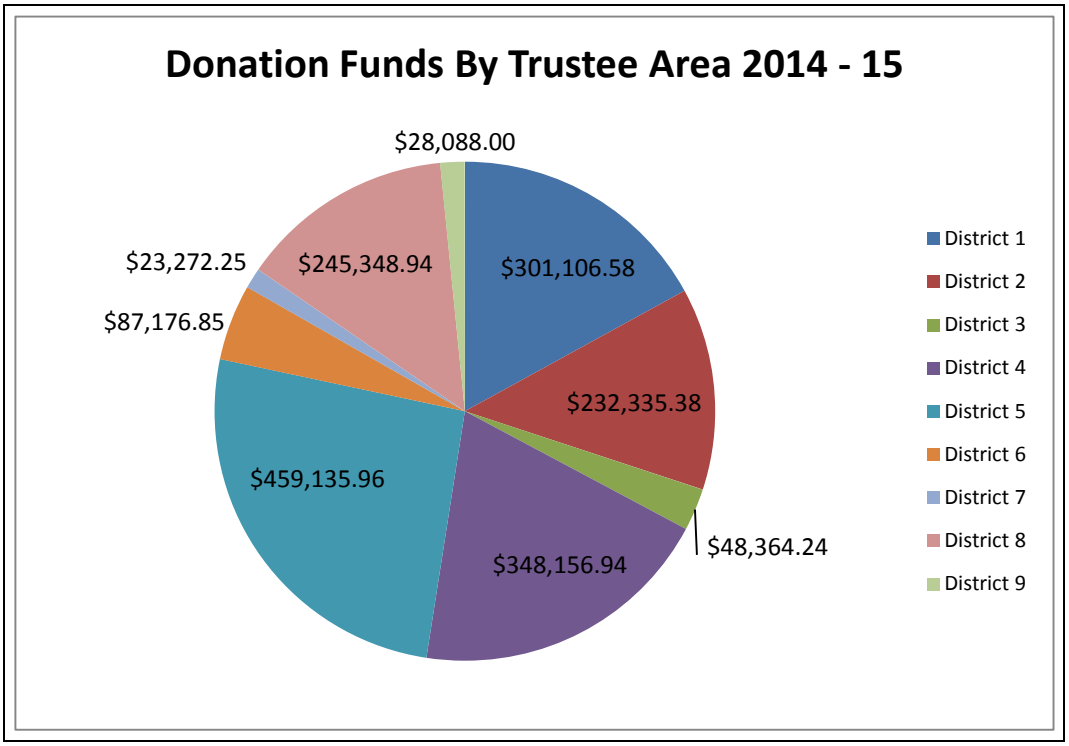
Donations to Schools by School Board Trustees Area 2012 - 2015

Board Trustee Area	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015
District I	$288,201.64	$166,988.00	$301,106.58
District II	$115,917.49	$58,380.00	$232,335.38
District III	$24,325.00	$65,776.50	$48,364.24
District IV	$201,263.40	$163,360.00	$348,156.94
District V	$455,548.02	$428,059.29	$459,135.96
District VI	$114,965.00	$27,495.00	$87,176.85
District VII	$20,029.58	$42,165.44	**$23,272.25**
District VIII	$86,365.21	$101,116.34	$245,348.94
District IX	$67,667.18	$78,529.05	**$28,088.00**
Total	$1,374,282.52	$1,131,869.62	$1,772,985.14

Source: Grant Department records of donations, 2013, 2014, 2015

Table 8 above identifies the donations received in each Trustee area. Table 8 shows that District V, which is one of the more affluent areas in the school district reported almost $460,000 in 2014 - 15 in additional funding through gifts and donations to the schools and students in that area. These additional dollars do not include grants. In comparison, Districts III and IX, two of the areas in the district with the highest poverty, received substantially less money collectively than the more affluent areas. District VII, which also has several pockets of affluent areas, consistently has one of the lowest funding amounts in donations to the schools in the region. Additional research showed that the schools in this area were not reporting in-kind donations because the PTA/PTO provided/purchased services without giving money directly to the schools.

The trend data below show that more donations are consistently provided to the schools in District V, with District IV following closely behind. There is a more than $400,000 disparity between the highest receiving trustee district and the lowest. As Figure 2 shows, almost all schools by trustee area had growth in donations and giving in the 2014 - 15 school year with the exception of Districts III, VII, and IX. District III and IX are also the highest poverty areas at 94% and 92% respectively. The majority of schools on the *Improvement Required* list can be found in District IX. Additionally, the District IX and II are heavily African American areas of the city, with low income levels. Although the majority group in the city is Hispanic, there is a high concentration of Hispanic students with low income levels in District III. As previously stated, the areas with high percentages of low income students received the fewest dollars through donations, whether cash or in-kind.



Source: Grant Department records of donations, 2015

Figure 2. Donation Funds by Trustee Area 2014 - 2015

Pedro Noguera (2002), in his article entitled, The Trouble with Black Boys: The Role and Influence of Environmental and Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of African American Males, asserted that it is possible to educate children successfully. He was especially concerned about the success of the Black male student who lives in poverty. Poverty greatly increases risk variables (i.e. single parent household, low birth weight, low educational attainment of parents, etc.). According to the 2011 American Fact Finder survey (U.S. Census Bureau), more than 28% of African Americans live below the poverty level, more than any other ethnic group in the country other than Native Americans who stand at more than 29%. More than ten and a half million

African Americans live in poverty. According to Noguera and others, African American children that live in poverty come to school with greater deficits and as a result more African American children, especially males, end up in special education classes.

Leaders of Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy and Strategies for Reading

So, what does it take to reach these students? As the research shows, there have been several attempts to decrease the achievement gap among students of color, from African centered schooling to charter schools. Articles by Ferguson (2001); Cotton (1991); and Boykin, Noguera, & ASCD (2011) provide information to support what can be done to help African American students succeed; however, much of the research written by African Americans is either ignored or seen as "less than" by those in power who feel that they are the experts and the work of African Americans is secondary to their input (Alridge, 2003; Holloway & Keppel, 2007). In some instances, the recommendations of researchers such as Ladson-Billings and Gay have made some inroads, but based on the widening gap between students of color and White students, there has been no sustained effort to determine what actually works to help African American students be more successful.

Leaders of Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy

There are many African American researchers who are making significant inroads in instructing others how to teach students of color. Although there are many, many authors and researchers who are leaders in this field, the individuals and organizations below helped guide my thinking in the beginning, and have stood out for

me throughout this research because they are focused on increasing the academic achievement of students of color through a different lens.

Lisa Delpit - Lisa Delpit's analysis of cultural misunderstandings and enlightenment are well respected and used to guide many researchers and educators who really want to help African American and other minorities, including the poor to receive the type of education they should have. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (Delpit, Lisa 1995, 2006) has greatly influenced the way people approach educating children if they really care about reaching and teaching them. One of the things that struck me in her book, *Other People's Children*, was how she looked at cultural conflict outside of African Americans. Also, her work has a lot to do with language and culture and how culture impacts the way the child behaves in the classroom.

Delpit also demonstrated how a community impacts students of color and their work. She provides insights into the importance of understanding the culture and community of the students so that success will not be misinterpreted by the teacher. Her work provides critical insights in how to effectively teach children of color. Her examples of how students use their community language versus "standard English" in the classroom could be a reflection of the relationship with the teacher. Delpit warns against constant correction of the students and provides suggestions of how to allow students to incorporate their "home" language into language styles that can be used with different audiences.

Gloria Ladson-Billings - Another well-respected African American educational expert is Gloria Ladson Billings, most notable for her work in the concept of "culturally relevant pedagogy." In her book, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (Ladson Billings, 2009), she examined the pedagogical practices of teachers (regardless of race) who are successful with African American students and develops profiles of those teachers. Ladson-Billings' focus in all of her work is to explain how to be a great and effective teacher of African American students. She also uses a story telling form in many of her books that is easy to follow and understand. Further, Ladson-Billings believes that all students can learn. She has also shockingly stated that the achievement gap can be closed, not just narrowed (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006, 2009). I agree with that assessment. She believes that African American students should not be afraid to be labeled as "acting White" because their academic success should be called "being Black."

It is incumbent on the teacher (and the school leadership) to ensure that the students are learning as they should be. Ladson-Billings places the onus of educating the youth on the teacher and does not make it the fault of the student. And although she believes that the village (i.e., the parents) of these youth are important, it is not up to them to educate these children. She believes that culturally responsive teachers should: (a) have good self-esteem; (b) be a part of the community (even if they do not live there); (c) give back to their community; (d) believe that all students can learn; (e) help students make connections to the world around them; (f) like teaching children (enjoy their work); and (g) know how to move students from one level to the next.

Additionally, Ladson-Billings provides strategies that can be used to increase the achievement of African American students. Many of her strategies are focused on the ethic of care. Rigor, relevance, and relationships are key to ensuring the success of African American students. Ladson-Billings highlights the importance of community and family as contributing to the success of the students. A lot of what she suggests in all of her work is basic common sense; however, the teachers must want to go the extra mile to ensure success for their students. Her suggestions and strategies connect to the nine cultural values of African Americans. Allowing students to make connections to what they already know (scaffolding) and linking learning to different aspects of their life (PBL) helps students to understand why they are learning what they are learning and why it is important to them.

Geneva Gay - The work of Geneva Gay is important to my research because it speaks to what I intrinsically believe as an educator. Prior to my current position in education, for fourteen years, I was a teacher in a high poverty, low academically-achieving middle school in Houston, Texas. I have been told by students and teachers alike, that I was a good teacher and that I was able to really reach those students. First and foremost to me was that I cared about the students and wanted them to be successful in life. They responded by caring about me in return. I believe that all children can learn and that they are waiting for a teacher to push them and turn them into the excellent, resilient adults that they will be. As I read about the teachers in her books who have been successful in education students of all ethnic groups, providing culturally responsive pedagogy, I remembered the great time that I had as a teacher. Although I

eventually left the classroom, it was not because I did not enjoy what I was doing, but that I needed to grow. I felt that moving to another position would allow me to reach more children than the ones that I could impact in one classroom. Also, as an author myself, the storytelling nature of her writing speaks to me and makes the reading pleasurable and easy.

Geneva Gay believes that "personal belief drives instructional behaviors" (p. 216). She emphasizes that culturally responsive caring is critical to student success. For Gay, caring is demonstrated in the way the teachers behave towards and interact with kids. For her, it means that teachers need to examine their own prejudices and expectations before they begin to teach. Through my journey here at Texas A & M, I have been able to examine my own prejudices as well. As an African American female, it has always been at the top of my agenda to help African American students to achieve and go further than they have previously gone. It was shocking to me as I have delved deeply into my own prejudices of how far I have come. I am more compassionate to all students and feel that it is extremely important that all students receive an equitable education and that all of their needs are met, whether they are linguistic or learning ability. I still focus on African American students because that is a part of my own heritage, but also because they have been at the bottom of the educational chain for too long. Gay details that teachers who exhibit authentic caring "have high expectations and will settle for nothing less than high achievement" (p. 49). These teachers will go above and beyond to ensure that their students do not fail, mainly because these teachers feel that all students can learn. Gay's work is very valuable to me because not only does she

provide a definition of what culturally responsive teaching is, but provides examples of how it looks and what makes it work.

Pedro Noguera - Pedro Noguera has greatly influenced what teachers can do to provide a culturally responsive and equitable education to students of color. He has most recently been a spokesperson and guest speaker on President Obama's "My Brothers' Keeper" initiative. He consistently addresses the disproportionality of African American males in prison, the high percentages of African American males in special education, and the low percentages in gifted classrooms. He brings to the forefront issues that America should be paying attention to, such as, high rates of suspension and expulsion, the low reading and math scores, and the high dropout rates of African American youth, especially males. He is most famously known for his book, "The trouble with Black boys... and other reflections on race, equity, and the future of education in America" where he highlights through a series of essays and stories what it is like for African American and Hispanic males in America and what can be done to help them achieve.

In his publication jointly created with Alan M. Blankstein, Noguera continues to focus on equity issues and how educational practices can be improved in order to provide excellence and equity for all students. In their book, Excellence through Equity (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015), the clarion call of the narrative is that "we do well when we all do well" (Eleanor Roosevelt). The authors state that it is critical that Americans change the paradigm in regard to changing attitudes about race and resources. Blankstein and Noguera reiterate the importance of equipping all students with the skills

they need for success in the future and provide strategies for how to achieve success in teaching students in a culturally responsive and caring manner.

Culturally-Responsive Teaching Strategies in Reading

ASCD (Cole, 1995; 2008) identified several strategies that have effectively worked to increase achievement levels in all students, but especially African American and other students of color. In *Educating Everybody's Children: Diverse Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners*, the ASCD not only lists what those strategies are, but why they are effective. For example, Strategy 1.2 *Use reality-based learning approaches* meets numbers five and six of the nine dimensions of African American culture - *(5) movement*, whereby students have a preference toward active learning, and *6) verve* - easily bored with routine. Works of these authors and others like them are slowly being referenced to make cultural changes in the classroom and in teaching children of color.

Teachers need to have expertise in subject-specific strategies, which is why it is also important for teachers to be experts in their subject matter. They must be able to recognize the importance of using universal, research-proven teaching and learning practices that are adaptable and proven to work with a broad range of students with varied backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives, and provide students with more than one way to be successful academically (Cole, 1995; Cole, 2001). Cole (1995), in the first edition of *Educating Everybody's Children,* identified 13 universal practices that had been found to be key in bridging the achievement gap. Five years later, in *More*

Strategies for Educating Everybody's Children (2001; 2008), three more such practices were added to the list, for a total of 16. These practices include the following strategies:

- Strategy 1.1: Provide opportunities for students to work in a variety of social configurations and settings.
- Strategy 1.2: Use reality-based learning approaches.
- Strategy 1.3: Encourage interdisciplinary teaching.
- Strategy 1.4: Involve students actively.
- Strategy 1.5: Analyze students' learning and reading styles.
- Strategy 1.6: Actively model behaviors.
- Strategy 1.7: Explore the fullest dimensions of thought.
- Strategy 1.8: Use a multicultural teaching approach.
- Strategy 1.9: Use alternative assessments.
- Strategy 1.10: Promote home/school partnerships.
- Strategy 1.11: Use accelerated learning techniques.
- Strategy 1.12: Foster strategies in questioning.
- Strategy 1.13: Emphasize brain-compatible instruction.
- Strategy 1.14: Activate students' prior knowledge.
- Strategy 1.15: Use a constructivist approach to teaching.
- Strategy 1.16: Organize instructionally effective classroom environments.

These strategies are directly aligned to what appears to work best with African American students (Cole, 2001, 2008). The most important component for resources in reading for African American students is that they be rigorous, culturally inclusive, and

able to be used at home and at school. Many teachers do not feel comfortable allowing students to take resources home, especially those resources they consider to be valuable taken home by students they consider lower income or students of color. But these same students have fewer resources than their more affluent peers, which can contribute to students falling further behind those that have resources at home (Cole, 2008, Duncan, et al, 2014)

What continues to be stated in the research is that there is a persistent gap in achievement by ethnicity, economic status, and gender. The literature regarding literacy and reading instruction from a culturally responsive perspective tells us that the best scientifically research-based strategies to use that can impact reading achievement as it relates to African American learners. Cheesman and De Pry (2010) provide the criteria as to what constitutes a scientifically research-based study. In order to be considered scientifically research-based, the study must: 1) have been published in a peer-reviewed journal or panel of experts; 2) the study results have been replicated by others; and 3) the scientists agree with the findings based on their own results. Based on this criteria, the following scientifically research-based strategies have been approved as meeting the measure to effective work with African American and other students of color.

One of the most important factors is a knowledgeable teacher. Teachers must know how to teach and understand the content that they are teaching (Acevos and Orosco, 2014; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Additionally, teachers who care about their students produce students who achieve better. Caring does not mean lowering standards or allowing students to do less, it means making sure the curriculum is

rigorous and that students have an opportunity to learn at the level where they are, and be treated as competent beings (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Gay, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2010). Other scientifically research-based strategies that support increasing student achievement are: 1) Response to Intervention (RtI); 2) include decoding and phonological awareness in the reading; 3) collaborative teaching; 4) responsive feedback; 5) modeling; 6) instructional scaffolding; 7) problem-solving approach (PBL); and 8) the use of assessment tools that identify what students know or need to know (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Cheesman & De Pry, 2010). Exposing students to a variety of reading materials is also important, especially ensuring that multiethnic and multicultural literature is included (Nichols, Rupley, Webb-Johnson, & Tlusty, 2000). The authors also suggest that a social action approach allows students to use literature to "identify social problems and concerns and to read about how the main character made decisions and took action to solve the problem" (Rupley, 2000, p. 14), considered to be the best form of cultural integration.

African American Students' Perceptions of their Reading Teachers' Impact on Success

When students feel as if the teacher cares and exhibits behaviors that demonstrate to the child that he/she feels the student has the capacity to excel, the student will do better in school (Solomon, et al., 2000). Students are smart. They know when they are being talked down to and when they are given work that is too easy for them, that doesn't challenge them. Students have to believe that they can achieve.

The expectations of the teacher, both low and high, have a strong impact of whether the student feels he/she can excel (Cole, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Delpit, 1995, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Additionally, teachers need an opportunity to receive professional development. Many times, students of color, especially those that are low income, are "intellectually starved" (Dougherty & Barth, 1997), when they are not in a classroom that challenges and guides them toward achieving mastery of core academic content and skills or are exposed to teachers with low expectations of the students.

Student Reaction to Perceived Culturally-Responsive or Unresponsive Teachers/Classroom

As stated above, expectation can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. Students who believe their teachers have their best interest at heart will try harder (Cole, 2008). Teachers who treat students harshly or with pity will have a more difficult time reaching the child. Disciplinary problems will increase and academic achievement will be lower. Students who are exposed to teachers who understand and respect the nine dimensions of the culture of the African American learner and embrace them with enthusiasm will greatly benefit the academic achievement of the African American learner. Use of these characteristics allows the student to "engage the world and others critically" (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This collaborative/cooperative hands-on learning can greatly enhance the academic experience of African American youth because it allows students to have a purpose in what they are learning. Students will be excited about the opportunity to use

what they learned in their everyday experience and will be more focused on learning what is being taught (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Summary

It is essential that educators approach teaching African America students using a culturally relevant pedagogy. Throughout history to today, students of color have not had the same supports, resources, or expectations from others as White students have had. There have been many instances where teachers state and feel that they are "colorblind," and they feel that it is a good thing to be colorblind in the world, but in the classroom, teachers must understand that the student's race, class, ethnicity, and even language affect the way they learn.

Katie Denslow (2000), in her paper entitled, *The Ability of Teachers to Close the Minority Achievement Gap Through Multicultural Teacher Training*, stated that through multicultural teacher training, teachers can learn to have an understanding of different races and ethnicities in order to incorporate differences in their curriculum. Research on effective schools has shown that when teaching and learning are positive experiences, high levels of academic success for all students can be achieved (Edmonds, 1979; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Li & Miller, 2008; Murphy & Hallinger, 1985). From the literature, I learned that the culture of schools for students of color, with a particular emphasis on African American children must be changed so that students begin to regard school as a place that will nurture and support them in culturally responsive ways. This systematic review of the literature supports this thesis. Overwhelmingly, researchers continue to point to cultural relevancy, proficiency, and/or responsiveness as one of the

most important components of good teaching and being able to reach African American and other students of color and make a difference in their educational lives.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

The goal of this concurrent mixed method study, in which I analyzed quantitative and qualitative data within the same analytical framework (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004), was to explore the research questions related to cultural responsiveness in teachers and African American students' academic achievement in reading, as well as whether the African American students' perception of their teachers as culturally responsive impacts their achievement as stated in Chapter One. The questions were:

1. What was the relationship between cultural responsiveness in teachers and their African American students' academic reading achievement?

2. How were the perceptions of African American students of their teachers being culturally responsive related to their reading achievement as measured by district approved assessment tests?

3. What was the relationship between a teacher being culturally responsive to students' needs and being identified as effective or highly effective?

Several instruments were identified to measure the variables used to analyze these questions. The methods utilized to test the research questions were illustrated in this chapter. The chapter was organized into four sections: (a) selection of participants; (b) instrumentation; (c) data collection; and (d) data analysis. (Creswell, 2003; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Selection of Participants

The sample for this study was comprised of forty-two students in third grade reading classes at two predominately African American schools in similar racial, low socioeconomic neighborhoods. More than 85% of these students receive free- and reduced-meal prices in the school lunch program. Although all forty-two students were observed and took the surveys, some of the surveys had to be removed because the students invalidated the results by answering one or more questions with more than one answer. The make-up of the classrooms was as follows:

Table 9

Classroom Demographics at Study Schools - Number and Percentage

School ID	Enrollment	African American		Hispanic		White	
School One	22	19	86%	3	14%	0	0%
School Two	20	16	80%	3	15%	1	5%
Total	42	35	84%	6	14%	1	2%

Source: Classroom enrollment data, 2016 - School One and School Two

The school district where these students were enrolled is a large urban school district in the southwestern part of the United States, The state had a high percentage of African American (25.8%) and Hispanic (62%) students. Because of the make-up of the city, many times the ethnic groups tend to live in community clusters. For use in this study, community clusters referred to groups of people with similar ethnic and/or socio-

economic status living in close proximity to one another. This community clustering influenced the racial makeup of the community school.

Purposive sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002) was used to choose the students to be studied and the schools they attended. The classrooms of students at these schools were selected primarily because of their low socio-economic status and high percentages of African American students enrolled. They were also chosen because the academic achievement of the two schools was very different and some areas, but similar in reading at the third grade level. Also, these students attend schools from two different areas of the city. One school is located in the south area of Houston and the other school is located in central Houston. One of the schools was considered low performing and was identified by the U. S. Department of Education (USDoE) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as a school in need of improvement. The term used by the state and federal government to refer to these schools is "persistently lowest performing schools" (USDoE, 2011). Additionally, the federal government, through states, provided funding to one of the schools through school improvement grants, also known as SIG grants. Schools are included on the "persistently lowest performing schools" list for one of the following reasons:

- "**Tier I**, which includes any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that (1) is among the lowest-achieving 5% of those schools in the state; or (2) is a high school that has had a graduation rate below 60% for a number of years. States have the option of identifying Title I eligible elementary schools that (1) are no higher achieving than the highest-achieving school

identified as a persistently lowest-achieving school in Tier I; and that (2) have not made AYP for at least two consecutive years; or are in the state's lowest quintile based on proficiency rates.

- **Tier II**, which includes any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I, Part A funds and (1) is among the lowest-achieving 5% of such secondary schools in the state; or (2) had a graduation rate below 60% for a number of years. States may also identify as Tier II schools Title I eligible secondary schools that (1) are no higher achieving than the highest-achieving school identified as a persistently lowest-achieving school in Tier II; or that had a graduation rate of less than 60% over a number of years; and that (2) have not made AYP for at least two consecutive years; or are in the state's lowest quintile based on proficiency rates.
- **Tier III**, which includes the remaining Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not Tier I schools. States have the option of identifying as Tier III schools (1) Title I eligible schools that do not meet the requirements to be in Tier I or Tier II; and (2) have not made AYP for at least two consecutive years; or are in the state's lowest quintile based on proficiency rates." (ies.ed.gov, 2011, "Baseline Analyses of SIG Applications," para. 4).

Schools included on the *persistently lowest performing schools* list were in danger of being closed or restructured (using a restart, turnaround, or transformation model). School One did not meet standard according to the Texas Education Agency standard and had a school accountability rating of Improvement Required. The other

school, School Two, met standard and received distinction designations of: 1) Academic Achievement in Mathematics; 2) Top 25 %: Student Progress; 3) Top 25 %: Closing Performance Gaps; and 4) Postsecondary Readiness. The third grade students at this school; however, did not meet standard in Reading (49%) although the campus as a whole met standard in Reading (67%). These schools had enrollments that ranged from 405 - 572 students, although the classes were of similar size. Additionally, these schools were chosen because these majority African American schools performed poorly in reading on the most recent state assessment and the schools had consistently done so for the last several years. One third grade class and their reading teacher at these identified schools participated in the study, for a total of 42 students and two teachers. Third grade was chosen because the district had a reading initiative that focused on third grade. Also, third grade is the critical grade for reading literacy and student success. Students that fail to master reading by third grade have higher dropout rates and school failure than other students (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Tables 10 and 11 below provide demographic data of the schools of participating students and teachers.

Table 10

Demographic Campus Overview

Area of the City	School ID#	Campus Enrollment	Ethnicity %			ED %	Met	SWD %	DI #
			AA	H	W				
Central	1	572	77	21	1	85	No	6	112
South	2	405	81	18	0	90	No	9	20

Source: District Profiles 2014-2015. Free/ Reduced Lunch (ED), Met Standard in Reading, Disability (SWD), and Discipline Infractions (DI)

Table 11

Third Grade Teacher Demographics

Area	# of Teachers	Ethnicity %				Ave. Years Teaching	Highest Degree	Attend Rate %	# Teachers 3rd Grade
		AA	A	H	W				
Central	31	71	6	3	16	10 years	M - 32%	95	4
South	25	92	4	0	4	12 years	M - 32%	93	3

Source: School District Profiles 2014-15. AA- African American; A - Asian; H - Hispanic, W - White. Number, Ethnicity, Number of Teachers on Campus, Average years teaching, Highest degree attained, and Teacher Attendance

These schools have scored poorly on the state level test in Reading at third grade for the last several years. Table 12 below demonstrates scores between the state, district, and campus tests using the most recent administration of the state test (2014 - 2015).

Table 12

Reading State Assessment Scores of Participating Schools

Area	**Reading Scores (All Grades)**	**TEA Accountability Rating**	**Reading Scores (Grade 3)**
Central	58%	Improvement Required	52%
South	67%	Met Standard	49%
School District	60%	Met Standard	71%
State	61%	N/A	76%

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) TEA, 2013

Instrumentation

I used several instruments that already existed, but were adapted to measure the variables that were tested. Because I adapted my questions from other researchers'

questions, I reached out to them for their permission before using them, explaining that the surveys would be adapted to my research. The first instrument that I described was an adaptation of a survey to determine student's perception of themselves as learners created in 2011 by Dr. Zeenat Ismail. Using her survey as a base, I created additional questions that I felt it was important for students to tell us about themselves. The purpose of this instrument was to determine students' attitudes towards themselves. It also provided an understanding of their perception of themselves as capable learners. There were twelve items on this survey, using a Likert scale, with the choices of: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. To ensure construct validity of the instrument, and to determine whether it was measuring what it was designed to measure, the questions were submitted to a group of child psychology experts, parents, teachers, and school leaders to determine if the questions are appropriate for the age group.

The second instrument I used was adapted from an instrument created by Kenyetta Quenishia Nelson-Smith in her dissertation in 2002 and from an instrument created by Dr. Zeenat Ismail, International Journal of Business and Social Science in 2011. The purpose of this instrument was to determine students' perceptions of their teacher as culturally responsive. There were fourteen items on this survey, again using a Likert scale, with the choices of: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. As with the previous instrument, validity and reliability were obtained through an expert panel which will include principals, teachers, students, parents, and

educational leaders. They had an opportunity to review the question items and provide feedback to me as to whether or not I was on the right track.

The third instrument that I used determined whether the students felt that the school environment was conducive to learning. This instrument was adapted from an instrument created by Dr. Abiola, explained in an article in the Journal of Educational and Social Research in 2013. There were twelve items on this survey in total; however there are three sections of four questions each. The sections referred to students' perception of: (1) the teaching method; (2) the teacher's classroom management; and (3) the school climate. This survey also used a Likert scale, with the choices of: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. The reading level of all three student surveys was created at a level of between 3.2 and 3.8 for each survey.

The fourth instrument that I used was to determine how the teachers felt about their students and themselves. This instrument was adapted from an instrument created by Kenyetta Quenishia Nelson-Smith in her dissertation in 2002 and from an instrument created by Dr. Zeenat Ismail, International Journal of Business and Social Science in 2011. The purpose of this instrument was to determine teachers' perceptions of themselves as culturally responsive. There were fifteen items on this survey, again using a Likert scale, with the choices of: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. As with the previous instruments, validity and reliability were obtained through an expert panel which includes principals, teachers, parents, and educational leaders. The panel had an opportunity to review the question items and provide feedback to me as to whether or not these would be good questions for the

teachers to answer. I also used an expert panel, consisting of current principals, teachers, and educational leaders in the African American community, to review the questions and provide feedback to me as to whether they feel as if I have asked the right questions. For each of the survey instruments, test-retest reliability were used to ensure that the scores are consistent over time. In order to get these results, after all tests were checked for validity, I would compare the answers provided with what I observed in the classrooms.

The fifth instrument that I used was an assessment tool through IStation. This school district, along with other school districts in the state of Texas and other school districts nationally, uses a computer-administered assessment tool through IStation (also known as Imagination Station). IStation's computer-adaptive assessments, known as ISIP™, are used by the teacher to guide students on personalized instructional paths unique to their needs. Many times, the teacher uses a computer lab to administer the assessment to an entire class or group of students; however, many times the assessment is administered in a classroom setting where students take turns using classroom computers.

The IStation assessments are given to the students at the beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and end of the year (EOY). IStation administers the assessment in both English and Spanish. IStation ISIP™ adapts each student's response to their level of understanding. If a student answers a question correctly, the computer provides a more difficult question for the next item. If the student answers incorrectly, a less difficult question is posed. ISIP™ uses interactive content to measure a student's

reading ability and skill development with computer-adaptive technology. Students' responses place them into one of three tier levels: Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. These tiers are directly related to Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies and not to the federal identification for schools in need of improvement. Tier 1 students function at or above their expected grade level. Tier 2 students function below their expected grade level and need frequent intervention to accelerate achievement. Tier 3 students function two or more levels below expected grade level and need intensive reading intervention. Figures 3 and 4 below show examples of Tier levels for English and Spanish assessments.

Overall Reading | Listening Comprehension | Letter Knowledge | Phonemic Awareness | Alphabetic Decoding | Comprehension | Vocabulary | Spelling | Text Fluency

	Pre-K			Kindergarten			1st Grade			2nd Grade			3rd Grade		
Assessment Month	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1
August	< 151	151-158	> 158	< 169	169-177	> 177	< 190	190-199	> 199	< 209	209-218	> 218	< 223	223-232	> 232
September	< 154	154-161	> 161	< 171	171-180	> 180	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 210	210-219	> 219	< 224	224-234	> 234
October	< 157	157-164	> 164	< 174	174-183	> 183	< 194	194-203	> 203	< 211	211-221	> 221	< 225	225-235	> 235
November	< 160	160-167	> 167	< 177	177-187	> 187	< 196	196-206	> 206	< 212	212-223	> 223	< 226	226-237	> 237
December	< 163	163-170	> 170	< 181	181-190	> 190	< 198	198-208	> 208	< 213	213-225	> 225	< 227	227-238	> 238
January	< 165	165-173	> 173	< 184	184-193	> 193	< 200	200-210	> 210	< 214	214-226	> 226	< 228	228-239	> 239
February	< 167	167-175	> 175	< 186	186-195	> 195	< 202	202-212	> 212	< 216	216-228	> 228	< 229	229-240	> 240
March	< 169	169-177	> 177	< 188	188-197	> 197	< 204	204-214	> 214	< 217	217-229	> 229	< 230	230-241	> 241
April	< 171	171-179	> 179	< 190	190-199	> 199	< 206	206-216	> 216	< 219	219-230	> 230	< 231	231-242	> 242
May	< 173	173-181	> 181	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 207	207-218	> 218	< 220	220-231	> 231	< 232	232-243	> 243
June	< 173	173-181	> 181	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 207	207-218	> 218	< 220	220-231	> 231	< 232	232-243	> 243
July	< 173	173-181	> 181	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 207	207-218	> 218	< 220	220-231	> 231	< 232	232-243	> 243

Source: Mathes, P., Torgesen, J. and Herron, J. (2016)

Figure 3. Tier 1 English IStation Level 1

Overall Reading | Vocabulary | Listening Comprehension | Reading Comprehension | Text Fluency | Phonemic and Phonological Awareness | Written Communication

	Pre-K			Kindergarten			1st Grade			2nd Grade			3rd Grade		
Assessment Month	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1
August	< 597	597-610	> 610	< 645	645-660	> 660	< 732	732-760	> 760	< 822	822-860	> 860	< 883	883-917	> 917
September	< 600	600-611	> 611	< 655	655-666	> 666	< 745	745-774	> 774	< 828	828-860	> 860	< 883	883-917	> 917
October	< 600	600-611	> 611	< 662	662-672	> 672	< 745	745-774	> 774	< 828	828-862	> 862	< 888	888-925	> 925
November	< 600	600-611	> 611	< 665	665-677	> 677	< 749	749-787	> 787	< 828	828-871	> 871	< 888	888-930	> 930
December	< 614	614-626	> 626	< 669	669-682	> 682	< 760	760-796	> 796	< 833	833-883	> 883	< 896	896-943	> 943
January	< 616	616-627	> 627	< 671	671-686	> 686	< 769	769-806	> 806	< 848	848-895	> 895	< 907	907-954	> 954
February	< 618	618-629	> 629	< 675	675-691	> 691	< 778	778-814	> 814	< 849	849-899	> 899	< 910	910-958	> 958
March	< 620	620-630	> 630	< 679	679-698	> 698	< 785	785-822	> 822	< 854	854-907	> 907	< 915	915-966	> 966
April	< 622	622-633	> 633	< 683	683-705	> 705	< 792	792-829	> 829	< 863	863-915	> 915	< 919	919-972	> 972
May	< 623	623-634	> 634	< 689	689-713	> 713	< 797	797-834	> 834	< 870	870-924	> 924	< 926	926-974	> 974
June	< 623	623-634	> 634	< 689	689-713	> 713	< 797	797-834	> 834	< 870	870-924	> 924	< 926	926-974	> 974
July	< 623	623-634	> 634	< 689	689-713	> 713	< 797	797-834	> 834	< 870	870-924	> 924	< 926	926-974	> 974

Source: Mathes, P., Torgesen, J. and Herron, J. (2016)

Figure 4. Tier 1 Spanish IStation Level 1

This assessment tool was used to measure student achievement in this study for several reasons: (a) it can provide growth measures for students at the BOY, MOY, and EOY levels. In this instance, data were used from the MOY and EOY areas since these measures were consistently completed throughout the district; (b) the IStation system can be used as an assessment measure of teacher effectiveness relative to student growth; and (c) the results from the state assessment (STAAR) would not be available until the

later in the year and does not use a benchmark measure for student growth. STAAR results were used, but were not available until late summer.

Additional data that were used were from the state assessment, STAAR scores. Although the STAAR test does not provide growth measures, it was used because teachers' assessment/evaluation was tied to STAAR scores. These scores, along with other indicators of teacher effectiveness, were used to calculate the teachers' effectiveness rating. The STAAR scores indicate whether or not the students met standard. They were also used to rate the schools as met standard or not.

The effects of well-prepared teachers and effective principals on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and ethnicity (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In order to determine the teacher effectiveness (highly effective, effective, needs improvement, and ineffective), with the teachers' permission, I reviewed the district's Principal Dashboard. The Principal Dashboard enables administrators to view in-house school data in any variety of ways – whole school, by grade, by teacher, individual student or subject, as well as view attendance, discipline, and statewide assessment data. This particular district used their own teacher appraisal system, created in-house. There are three components to the appraisal system: Instructional Practices, Student Performance (state assessments), and Professional Expectations. The Performance Criteria Weighted Percentages of each of these components are: (a) Instructional Practices – 50%; (b) Student Performance – 30%; and (c) Professional Expectations – 20%, which indicates that student performance on the state assessment can influence the teacher's assessment.

If a teacher does not have a Student Performance Rating (teaches a course that is not tested), the teacher's default rating percentages will be: Instructional Practices – 70% and Professional Expectations – 30%. The teacher evaluation was used to determine teacher effectiveness.

I also spent time in the classroom doing observations of the teachers' classroom teaching style and pedagogy. There were certain culturally responsive clues that I was looking for. In addition to viewing how the teachers interacted with the students, I also observed the artifacts around the room in the form of culturally relevant literature and evidence of student work. I performed two observations per classroom. Additionally, in order to ensure that I could readily identify what a culturally responsive classroom looks like, I created a list of culturally responsive cues based on the work of Gay (2010), Ladson-Billings (2009), Delpit (2006), and Blankstein and Noguera (2015). In order to establish trustworthiness and credibility, I: (a) performed two observations per classroom in addition to what I observed when the surveys were given; (b) interacted with the teachers and provided the rationale as to why this work was important; and (c) completed an audit trail in order to ensure that the research was performed the same way each time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Data Collection

This problem of practice used a concurrent mixed method of data collection and analysis. A qualitative methodology was used through observations. I used several sources of quantitative documentation, including three separate surveys, the state assessment, a district-wide reading assessment, and the teacher's evaluation. The

teachers were surveyed because I was interested in how they perceived themselves as culturally responsive educators. Additionally, the district dashboard was used to highlight the number of discipline referrals that the teachers make on their students of color. Before data collection began, I received written consent from the school principals, the school district administration office, the district's research and accountability office, and the teachers. I also went through the IRB process through the Texas A & M University's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. Several phases were included in the study, including the process for choosing the schools, the protocols I used to get the data, and how the participants were debriefed.

Phase 1

Phase 1 identifies what I would do before the data were collected. Based on the research questions for the study, the first thing I did was research the schools in the targeted district that had a high percentage of African American students. I used the district profiles to identify possible schools and pulled the school data for each school using the most current school profiles. Since third grade was the focus, all of the school data pulled came from elementary schools. Once the schools were identified as having a high percentage of African American students and high free and reduced lunch percentages, I reviewed their reading data, using the scores from the most recent administration of the state assessment – STAAR test.

Since the study also deals with student perception, I attempted to find schools that had teachers of more than one race or sex that taught reading. I also looked at the most recent listing of schools included on the U. S. Department of Education's

Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools list and the Texas Education Agency's list of *Schools in Need of Improvement* and that had not meet standard in reading. Schools with all of these characteristics were chosen to participate in the study. Using the list of schools, I went back to the district administration and the research and accountability department for permission to go forward with the research on the schools chosen.

Two schools were chosen to participate in this study. I contacted the principals at each school by email and requested permission to include their schools in the study, assuring them that no identifying information would be used. I explained that one third grade class at each school would be chosen to participate. The principals agreed to allow their schools to participate and provided the names of the third grade teachers at each of their schools. I individually emailed the teachers to request permission to use their classroom and students in the study. Only one teacher at each school responded to the emails. These were the teachers that participated in the study. The teacher and the students from these two classes were surveyed and observed. The surveys are included in the appendices. Students and teachers were informed that the survey was voluntary. Additionally, informal interviews were held with the teachers, before and after the observations of the classrooms were completed.

Phase II

During Phase II, I constructed the instruments, adapted from the previously described authors. To ensure that the surveys could be understood by the majority, if not all, of the students, I ensured that the surveys were written at a 3.4 grade reading level. Once the instruments were completed, I presented the instruments, along with the

participant information to the Texas A & M University's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. Additionally, a copy of the instruments were presented to the district's research and accountability department for two reasons – (a) to ensure that the questions were allowable for distribution to students and (b) to ensure that they had the capacity to provide student data associated with the study.

During this phase, I determined how the surveys would be distributed to the students, as well as analyzed how well the participating students did on previous benchmark testing of the state assessment and the district approved assessment. The first instrument was given to the participating students in the last days of the month during the third month of school in the spring. This instrument was used to determine how students feel about themselves. All forty-two students participated in the survey administration of the first survey instrument. The second instrument was given to the students during early-April. This instrument was used to provide information about the students' perception of the teachers. Twenty-two students participated in the survey at School One and nineteen students participated in the survey at School Two. One of the students at School Two answered two of the questions with two different answers; this test was discarded as invalid. The third and final survey instrument, related to student engagement was distributed to the students during late-April, several weeks after the second instrument was given. One of the students at School One invalidated the survey and that student's survey was not used. All survey instruments were distributed and collected before the end of April. The teacher surveys were also given during this time frame. Additionally, during this time, I formally observed each of the classrooms on two

separate occasions on two different days each, for a total of four formal observations, two at each school.

Phase III

During the month of May, I reviewed the data collected from the students, with the intention of sharing the information gathered with the students in each classroom, the teachers, and the school principals at a later date. Data were collected on (a) IStation ISIP™ assessments; (b) students perception of themselves; (c) students perception of their teachers; (d) students perception of their classroom and school; (e) teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers; (f) teacher evaluation data; (g) state assessment (STAAR) data, and (h) observation data. At all phases of data collection, the identities of the students and teachers were protected to ensure confidentiality. No identifier of the students or teachers was used, whether by school ID, social security number, or name, and none of the student or teacher identification information was included in the study. Data were entered into a computer program and the information was aggregated and/or disaggregated according to how data were used.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Responses shown above were input into SPSS for each of the students who took the iStation assessment, along with their attainment on the middle of the year (MOY) and end of the year (EOY) assessments shown as on grade level or not and whether there was growth. The rating from the teachers was included as well. All twenty-two students at School One took both the MOY and EOY; however, only fifteen students at School

Two took both the MOY and the EOY for the iStation. Tests of statistical analysis were performed to determine theory validation (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The frequency and percentage of responses to the survey questions from both student instruments were analyzed separately. These items were displayed using descriptive statistics and tables obtained from the SPSS program. An item analysis was used to indicate the mean responses of those students who improved on the reading section of the MOY and EOY assessment and those who did not. In order to test the statistical significance of the data, a t test for independent means was performed on each item, for students who were on grade level and students who were not or showed no growth to determine if there was a difference between their responses on the surveys and the mean student growth.

I then determined the degrees of freedom for School One (21) and School Two (14) and used .05 level of confidence. Since there were several types of information that I obtained from the data, how the students feel about themselves, how they perceive their teacher and school as culturally responsive, and the effectiveness of the teacher, I again used a t test because there were at least two groups of students who were not duplicated who gave their perceptions of their teachers and schools as culturally responsive (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Qualitative

The qualitative analysis of data was based on an analysis of my observations of the classrooms, interaction with the students, as well as talking to the classroom teachers during unstructured interviews. The rationale for performing a qualitative analysis was to allow me to gain insight into why students scored their teachers they way they did on

the surveys and how what I observed could be interpreted based on the students' academic achievement (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). The analysis included looking for similarities and differences in the teaching styles and the interaction of the teachers and the students. The data were coded and categorized. Themes that emerged from the data were compared to existing literature on culturally responsive pedagogy. The classroom interactions were observed during different times of the day with the teacher and the same group of students. The themes that emerged from the observations were racial uplift, anxiety, communalism, orality, movement expressiveness, and verve.

Summary

This chapter reintroduced the purpose of this study and restated the research questions. The participants chosen, through purposive sampling, were selected from two different areas of the city, south and central areas of a large urban school district in the southwest part of the United States. These schools were chosen because they were either considered low performing, having been identified by the United States Department of Education (USDoE) and the state agency as a school in need of improvement or as "persistently lowest performing schools," or because had not meet standard on the third grade reading assessment. The selection of 42 student participants and two teacher participants was discussed. This section also discussed how many participants actually took the surveys and how many of the surveys were used. Additionally, I discussed the validity and reliability of the instruments. Data collection procedures and response rates were also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the methods of data analysis for the research questions were discussed and presented, as well as the examination of the statistical data

analysis. Results of the data analysis are presented in the following chapter (Hernandez, 2004, p. 122 as referenced in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA: QUANTITATIVE

Introduction

This study intended to investigate the perceptions of third grade low-income, African American students of color of the cultural responsiveness of their reading teacher and whether or not the teacher was considered effective. The purpose of the study was achieved by examining the interactions of the students with the teacher and through feedback received from the students and teachers through surveys, observations, and informal teacher interviews. The purpose was also achieved by examining the findings from the teachers' evaluations, and student success on both the district approved and state assessment tests. This chapter presents the results of quantitative data analysis for the three stated research questions.

The descriptive statistics used for the study were univariate and bivariate statistics. The rationale for using these statistics was the ability to analyze the relationship between the variables, in this case the perception of students of the cultural responsiveness of their teachers and the teachers' ratings as highly effective or effective, as well as how well the students performed in school, on the MOY and EOY administration of the district approved assessment test in Reading, and the state assessment test in Reading. The information gathered from surveys two and three were used to answer research question one: " What was the relationship between cultural responsiveness in teachers and their African American students' academic reading achievement?" and question two: " How were the perceptions of African American

students of their teachers being culturally responsive related to their reading achievement as measured by district approved assessment tests?" Additionally, student scores on the district approved assessment test were used to answer research questions one and two. The teachers' evaluation scores and survey questions three and four were used to answer research question three: " What was the relationship between a teacher being culturally responsive to students' needs and being identified as effective or highly effective?" Survey number one was used as a gauge to determine how students felt about themselves and to determine students' self-efficacy.

Descriptive Statistics

Student demographic data provided context to the types of students in the classrooms of teachers from both schools. An analysis of the data from Survey 2 and Survey 3 for both schools was used to gather student perception data regarding how the students felt about their teachers. These data indicate how the students felt about their reading teacher and whether he/she was accepting of them and was culturally responsive. Culturally responsive teaching was defined in this study as using the cultural frames of reference, background, previous experiences, and performance approaches of ethnically diverse students so that learning is more pertinent and effective for them (Gay, 2010).

Table 13

Demographic Variables

School	Afr. Amer	Hisp.	White	Spec. Ed.	G/T	Free/Reduced Lunch
School One	19	3	0	3	2	22
School Two	16	3	1	3	1	20

Source: District Research Department, 2016. Represents numbers of students, not percentages.

The purpose of survey instruments 2 and 3 was to identify students' perceptions of their teachers' attitudes towards them in general. As shown in the Tables 14 and 15 below, questions ranged from statements regarding whether the students thought the teacher liked them to whether or not the teacher wants them to learn. The tables identify the number of students who took the surveys at each school, and the mean and standard deviation based on a low score of 1 and a high of 4. Information from teacher surveys were critical to understanding how the teachers see themselves. Other data, including student achievement and teacher ratings were shown to help answer research questions.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics School One Instrument 2

School One Student Responses	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. I think my teacher likes this school.	22	1	4	2.14	1.32
2. I think my teacher likes me.	22	1	4	3.27	1.202
3. My teacher talks to all the students in the class in a nice way.	22	1	4	3.41	1.141
4. I think my teacher wants me to learn.	22	4	4	4	0
5. I feel that my teacher is happy when I am good in class.	22	2	4	3.86	0.468
6. I feel my teacher wants me to do good in class.	22	3	4	3.95	0.213
7. My teacher does not mind answering my questions.	22	1	4	2.45	1.438
8. I learn when my teacher teaches me.	22	4	4	4	0
9. I feel my teacher likes to teach.	22	1	4	3.68	0.894
10. I feel I can use what I am learning.	22	1	4	3.73	0.767
11. My reading teacher helps me do better.	22	3	4	3.91	0.294
12. I feel happy in my reading classroom.	22	1	4	3.5	0.913
13. My reading teacher likes to hear what I have to say.	22	1	4	2.64	1.465
14. My reading teacher is sad when I do not do well.	22	1	4	2.68	1.492
Valid N (listwise)	22				

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics School Two Instrument 2

School Two Student Responses	n*	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. I think my teacher likes this school.	19	1	4	3.47	0.772
2. I think my teacher likes me.	19	1	4	3.37	0.831
3. My teacher talks to all the students in the class in a nice way.	19	1	4	3.32	1.157
4. I think my teacher wants me to learn.	19	1	4	3.63	0.761
5. I feel that my teacher is happy when I am good in class.	19	1	4	3.47	0.964
6. I feel my teacher wants me to do good in class.	19	3	4	3.84	0.375
7. My teacher does not mind answering my questions.	19	1	4	2.95	1.311
8. I learn when my teacher teaches me.	19	1	4	3.53	0.841
9. I feel my teacher likes to teach.	19	1	4	3.37	1.116
10. I feel I can use what I am learning.	19	1	4	3.37	1.165
11. My reading teacher helps me do better.	19	1	4	3.32	1.108
12. I feel happy in my reading classroom.	19	1	4	2.74	1.147
13. My reading teacher likes to hear what I have to say.	19	1	4	3.32	0.885
14. My reading teacher is sad when I do not do well.	19	1	4	2.84	1.344
Valid N (listwise)	19				

** One survey was invalidated because many questions had multiple answers.*
Minimum (Min), Maximum (Max)

Additional data from both schools in Tables 16 and 17 below were used to determine students' perceptions of their teachers as culturally responsive. Although the students were not exposed to the term "culturally responsive," the answers below helped to determine whether the teachers exhibited care and understanding of how to teach African American and other students of color. These questions were divided by category. Category/Section 1 of each table examined how the students at School One

perceived the teacher to be towards them personally. The next Category/Section 2 had to do with classroom management and how the students felt about how all students were treated, if fairness was apparent, and whether the class was orderly and organized. Category/ Section 3 was related to how students felt about school climate, i.e., safety and communalism. These ratings had a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 4. Important to note was that students did not feel safe at school and did not feel as if students get along well, an indication that school climate needs to improve.

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics School One Instrument 3

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Perceptions of Teaching Method					
1. My teacher calls on all students during reading time.	21	1	4	2.52	1.289
2. My teacher likes me to work with others.	21	1	4	3.00	1.304
3. My reading teacher helps me in a way that does not shame me.	21	1	4	3.52	.981
4. My teacher helps me learn to read	21	1	4	3.24	1.300
Students' Perceptions of Classroom Management					
1. My teacher keeps the classroom neat and clean.	21	1	4	3.71	.717
2. My teacher treats everyone in the classroom the same way.	21	1	4	2.95	1.284
3. The rules for everyone in the class are the same.	21	1	4	3.38	1.203
4. My teacher makes it easy to read in reading class	21	1	4	3.10	1.375
Students' Perceptions of School Climate					
1. My school is quiet and peaceful.	21	1	4	1.67	1.197
2. Most students at my school get along.	21	1	4	2.00	1.183
3. The principal knows my name.	21	1	4	3.52	1.030
4. I feel safe at my school.	21	1	4	2.48	1.436
Valid N (listwise)	21				

Students at School Two received the same questions as the students at School One received. As above, Table 17 below identifies the number of students in the class, the minimum and maximum rating/score that the survey question received, even if only one student used the rating, the mean for the group, and the standard deviation. As shown above, the students in School Two below rated the school climate as low, especially in the areas of school safety and students getting along well with other students at the school, an indication that the school climate needs to improve, which may well be out of the teacher's control. It was important to note that the majority of the students stated that the principal knows their name.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics School Two Instrument 3

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Students' Perceptions of Teaching Method					
1. My teacher calls on all students during reading time.	20	1	4	2.90	1.210
2. My teacher likes me to work with others.	20	1	4	3.20	1.056
3. My reading teacher helps me in a way that does not shame me.	20	1	4	3.35	.988
4. My teacher helps me to learn how to read.	20	1	4	3.35	1.089
Students' Perceptions of Classroom Management					
1. My teacher keeps the classroom neat and clean.	20	1	4	3.35	1.137
2. My teacher treats everyone in the classroom the same way.	20	1	4	2.65	1.424
3. The rules for everyone in the class are the same.	20	1	4	3.10	1.334
4. My teacher makes it easy to read in reading class	20	1	4	2.70	1.418

Table 17 Continued

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Students' Perceptions of School Climate					
1. My school is quiet and peaceful.	20	1	4	1.50	1.000
2. Most of the students at my school get along.	20	1	4	1.95	1.234
3. The principal knows my name.	20	1	4	3.40	.995
4. I feel safe at my school.	20	1	4	1.90	1.165
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Below, Table 18 identifies the perceptions of the two teachers of themselves as educators. They also had a score from one to four, with four being the highest.

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics Teacher Survey Data

	Sch. 1	Sch. 2	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. I enjoy teaching my students.	4	4	4.00	.000
2. I think all students can learn.	4	4	4.00	.000
3. I think it is important to introduce students to different cultures.	4	4	4.00	.000
4. I feel that my students like me.	4	4	4.00	.000
5. My classroom is a place of learning.	4	4	4.00	.000
6. I feel that my students love to read.	3	4	3.50	.707
7. I feel that I reach all of the students.	4	4	4.00	.000
8. I feel like my students trust me.	4	4	4.00	.000
9. I feel comfortable pushing the students to higher levels.	4	4	4.00	.000
10. I feel comfortable teaching all aspects of the curriculum.	4	3	3.50	.707
11. I have all the professional development I need.	4	1	2.50	2.121
12. There is a network of support for me at work.	4	4	4.00	.000
13. I have a good relationship with the students' parents.	3	4	3.50	.707
14. I feel comfortable being evaluated by others.	4	4	4.00	.000
15. There are very few discipline problems in my classroom.	4	1	2.50	2.121

All of these student and teacher perceptions were analyzed to determine how students perceive the teachers and how teachers perceive themselves as culturally responsive. The question to be determined now is whether these teachers are effective or highly effective based on their ratings, but most importantly, student performance.

Student Achievement Variables

Also analyzed were the scores from the middle of the year (MOY) and end of the year (EOY) assessments. Student achievement using the MOY assessment timetable, is based on students in Tier 1 earning a score of 238 to 239. Using the EOY assessment timetable, student achievement is based on students earning a Tier 1 score of 242 to 243. Figure 5 below shows the score ranges the students should have made during the MOY and EOY and the months these assessments are usually taken by the students.

Overall Reading | Listening Comprehension | Letter Knowledge | Phonemic Awareness | Alphabetic Decoding | Comprehension | Vocabulary | Spelling | Text Fluency

	Pre-K			Kindergarten			1st Grade			2nd Grade			3rd Grade		
Assessment Month	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1
August	< 151	151-158	> 158	< 169	169-177	> 177	< 190	190-199	> 199	< 209	209-218	> 218	< 223	223-232	> 232
September	< 154	154-161	> 161	< 171	171-180	> 180	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 210	210-219	> 219	< 224	224-234	> 234
October	< 157	157-164	> 164	< 174	174-183	> 183	< 194	194-203	> 203	< 211	211-221	> 221	< 225	225-235	> 235
November	< 160	160-167	> 167	< 177	177-187	> 187	< 196	196-206	> 206	< 212	212-223	> 223	< 226	226-237	> 237
December	< 163	163-170	> 170	< 181	181-190	> 190	< 198	198-208	> 208	< 213	213-225	> 225	< 227	227-238	> 238
January	< 165	165-173	> 173	< 184	184-193	> 193	< 200	200-210	> 210	< 214	214-226	> 226	< 228	228-239	> 239
February	< 167	167-175	> 175	< 186	186-195	> 195	< 202	202-212	> 212	< 216	216-228	> 228	< 229	229-240	> 240
March	< 169	169-177	> 177	< 188	188-197	> 197	< 204	204-214	> 214	< 217	217-229	> 229	< 230	230-241	> 241
April	< 171	171-179	> 179	< 190	190-199	> 199	< 206	206-216	> 216	< 219	219-230	> 230	< 231	231-242	> 242
May	< 173	173-181	> 181	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 207	207-218	> 218	< 220	220-231	> 231	< 232	232-243	> 243
June	< 173	173-181	> 181	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 207	207-218	> 218	< 220	220-231	> 231	< 232	232-243	> 243
July	< 173	173-181	> 181	< 192	192-201	> 201	< 207	207-218	> 218	< 220	220-231	> 231	< 232	232-243	> 243

Source: *Mathes, P., Torgesen, J. and Herron, J. (2016)*

Figure 5. Third Grade BOY, MOY, and EOY 1

Below are the results of the IStation's computer-adaptive assessments, known as ISIP™ for School One and School Two. The MOY and EOY assessments were used because they were consistently available for the majority of the students in both classes. The majority of the students did not take the beginning of the year (BOY) assessment, but the majority of them took the MOY and EOY; therefore, student growth was measured using these assessments. Of the students at School One, 100% of them took both tests. Seventy-five percent of the students at School Two took both tests. The timeframe for students to take the MOY assessment is December through January. EOY assessments are generally given in April or May. It is important to note the range of scores that should be scored by the students in third grade compared to actual student scores.

Table 19

School One - Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	n	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Final_ISIPER_MOY_Score	233.8914	22	15.63734	3.33389
	Final_ISIPER_EOY_Score	233.1805	22	15.09595	3.21847

Table 20

School Two - Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	n	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Final_ISIPER_MOY_Score	243.8327	15	12.24681	3.16211
	Final_ISIPER_EOY_Score	247.7993	15	10.78102	2.78365

An additional student achievement variable that was analyzed were the results of the state assessment in Reading. The data below identifies the percentage of students that met standard on the state assessment in Reading. Table 21 identifies the percentage of students that met standard in the teachers' rooms at School One and School Two, as well as a comparison to the other third grade students at the school.

Table 21

State Assessment Scores - School One and School Two

Name of Group	% Met Standard	% Did Not Meet Standard
School One Participating Third Grade Classroom	53%	47%
School One All Third Grade Overall	38%	62%
School Two Participating Third Grade Classroom	56%	44%
School Two All Third Grade Overall	30%	70%

Teacher rating showed how teachers were rated based on their overall teacher evaluation by their principals, as well as the scores from the students' state assessment. In this school district, several variables are used to determine a teacher's appraisal rating.

Table 22

Teacher Appraisal Rating

Teacher	**Score**	**Rating**
School One	2.6	Effective
School Two*	*	Exceeds Expectations/Distinguished

*School District data; * Self-report - new teacher data were not available from the previous year.*

Testing the Research Questions

Descriptive and paired samples statistics were used to investigate the three research questions in this study. The first survey was analyzed using mean scores to determine how students felt about themselves. To investigate the first and second questions, the mean scores were compared to determine student perceptions of their teachers as culturally responsive. Additionally, a paired t-test was used to determine whether the students did better with one teacher over another. The level of significance .05 was used for each statistical analysis used in this study. This is a commonly used level in analyzing results (Lundenburg & Irby, 2008).

Quantitative

Research Question 1

Question 1. What was the relationship between cultural responsiveness in teachers and their African American students' academic reading achievement? The first research question examined the results of the survey questions using survey instruments two and three. On each of the questions (14 in survey two and 12 in survey three), the students were asked to rate whether they agreed or strongly agreed or disagreed or strongly disagreed about the statement regarding their reading teacher. The answers were assigned number 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for agree, and 4 for strongly agree. All of the questions were analyzed to answer research questions using mean and paired samples statistics. The mean was used to determine how the students felt about their teachers as culturally responsive teachers. The data from survey two

indicate that the students felt as if the teachers' overall mean scores were *M = 3.373, SD = 0.829* at School one and *M = 3.324, SD = 0.984* at School two.

An analysis of the schools side-by-side in Table 23 below shows that students rated the teachers higher in different areas. Also, some of the questions are correlated, based on the researcher's interpretation, to the nine learning dimensions of African American culture. These are (a) spirituality - a belief in a higher power; (b) harmony - tied into respecting surroundings and getting along with one another; (c) affect - emotional expressiveness; (d) **communalism** - as social beings, desiring to interact with others; (e) **movement expressiveness** - preference toward active learning and hands-on activities; (f) **verve** - easily bored with routine; (g) expressive individualism - having a unique style; (h) **orality** - oral or verbal; likes to talk; and (i) social time orientation - a focus on events and when things happened rather than a specific time. Table 23 also indicated the questions that were tied to the ethic of caring. It was identified by the double asterisk. The data were then analyzed tied to the "Tier 1" (Williams, 2015) African American cultural dimensions of communalism, movement expressiveness, verve, and orality. A relationship was found to exist with the teacher who the students identified as having the highest mean of these characteristics. As previously stated, Table 23 identified whether the questions are connected to the cultural characteristics and/or caring and whether they are not.

Table 23

Comparison Data Schools 1 and 2 Instrument 2

Instrument 2	Nine Areas	School One Mean	School One Std. Deviation	School Two Mean	School Two Std. Deviation
1. I think my teacher likes this school.	b	2.14	1.32	3.47	0.772
2. I think my teacher likes me.	d	3.27	1.202	3.37	0.831
3. My teacher talks to all the students in the class in a nice way.	c	3.41	1.141	3.32	1.157
4. I think my teacher wants me to learn.	**	4	0	3.63	0.761
5. I feel that my teacher is happy when I am good in class.	b	3.86	0.468	3.47	0.964
6. I feel my teacher wants me to do good in class.	d	3.95	0.213	3.84	0.375
7. My teacher does not mind answering my questions.	h	2.45	1.438	2.95	1.311
8. I learn when my teacher teaches me.	--	4	0	3.53	0.841
9. I feel my teacher likes to teach.	**	3.68	0.894	3.37	1.116
10. I feel I can use what I am learning.	i	3.73	0.767	3.37	1.165
11. My reading teacher helps me do better.	**	3.91	0.294	3.32	1.108
12. I feel happy in my reading classroom.	i	3.5	0.913	2.74	1.147
13. My reading teacher likes to hear what I have to say.	h	2.64	1.465	3.32	0.885
14. My reading teacher is sad when I do not do well.	c	2.68	1.492	2.84	1.344

This side-by-side comparison of the teacher at School One and the teacher at School Two show that students identified that they did not think that the teacher liked the school as much as the students at School Two thought that their teacher liked the school, which is tied to the cultural characteristic of harmony (respecting surroundings).

Additionally, all of the students at School One and School Two felt that their teacher wanted them to learn. Even though it is not specifically tied to the nine characteristics, it is important to note whether or not the students felt their teacher wanted them to learn, which is tied to the ethic of caring. Analyzing questions 7 and 13 for the School One teacher, which is tied to the characteristic of orality, a critical cultural component of these students. Finally, question 14 received a lower score for both teachers, indicating that students do not feel as if the teacher is sad when they do not do well. This could be an indication of care, but is also tied to affect or emotional expressiveness, indicating that the teachers may not have shown their emotions one way or another regarding the students' achievement.

Survey three also was shown in a side-by-side analysis of the schools that confirms a similar rating for both teachers in the survey. Table 24 below identifies how the teachers were rated in comparison to one another. Again, some of the questions are correlated, based on the researcher's interpretation, to the nine learning characteristics of African American students. These are (a) spirituality - a belief in a higher power; (b) harmony - tied into respecting surroundings; (c) affect - emotional expressiveness; (d) **communalism** - as social beings; (e) **movement expressiveness** - preference toward active learning; (f) **verve** - easily bored with routine; (g) expressive individualism - having a unique style; (h) **orality** - oral or verbal; likes to talk; and (i) social time orientation - focus on events rather than time. The nine dimensions were divided by tiers, with Tier 1 being the most used and identified. Tier 1 dimensions are communalism, movement expressiveness, orality, and verve (Williams, 2015). Other

areas shown in the Table 24 are tied to the ethic of caring**. In this analysis, the teacher who demonstrated more Tier 1 cultural dimensions, based on the students' perceptions could be considered more culturally responsive than the one who do not.

Table 24

Descriptive Statistics Schools 1 and 2 Instrument 3

	Nine Areas	Sch. 1	Sch. 1	Sch. 2	Sch. 2
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students' Perceptions of Teaching Method					
1. My teacher calls on all students during reading time.	h	2.52	1.289	2.90	1.210
2. My teacher likes me to work with others.	d, c, h, i	3.00	1.304	3.20	1.056
3. My reading teacher helps me in a way that does not shame me.	b, **	3.52	.981	3.35	.988
4. My teacher helps me to learn how to read.	i	3.24	1.300	3.35	1.089
Students' Perceptions of Classroom Management					
1. My teacher keeps the classroom neat and clean.	b	2.52	1.289	3.35	1.137
2. My teacher treats everyone in the classroom the same way.	d, h	2.95	1.284	2.65	1.424
3. The rules for everyone in the class are the same.	d	3.52	.981	3.10	1.334
4. My teacher makes it easy to read in reading class	--	3.24	1.300	2.70	1.418
Students' Perceptions of School Climate					
1. My school is quiet and peaceful.	a, b,	1.67	1.197	1.50	1.000
2. Most of the students at my school get along.	a,	2.00	1.183	1.95	1.234
3. The principal knows my name.	d	3.52	1.030	3.40	.995
4. I feel safe at my school.	b	2.48	1.436	1.90	1.165
Valid N (listwise)					

One note that should be made is that these are the students' perceptions of their teacher on one particular day. These perceptions could change based on interactions with the teacher, classmates, principal, or other individuals they come across. Based on the student perceptions of the teachers, it would seem as if the teachers are culturally responsive, with the mean for teacher 2 (M), being slightly higher than teacher 1 in the areas of communalism, movement expressiveness; verve; and orality.

Table 25 below can also be used to analyze questions one and two as it shows that the teachers had very similar perceptions of themselves as teachers, having a mean of 3.7, with a standard deviation of .424 (M, 3.7; SD, .424), with a statistical significance between the teachers perceptions of themselves; especially in the area of professional development needs and student discipline (M, 2.5; SD, 2.121).

Table 25

Descriptive Statistics Teacher Survey Data

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teacher 1	1	3	4	3.87	.707
Teacher 2	1	1	4	3.53	2.121

Research Question 2

Question 2. How were the perceptions of African American students of their teachers being culturally responsive related to their reading achievement as measured by district approved assessment tests? To answer question two, an review of the district approved student assessment was used. Students at School One had an MOY assessment score of 233.8914 and an EOY assessment score of 233.1805. These

students had not attained the Tier 1 level that they should have earned by the MOY timeframe. The students at School One did not take the BOY so it is difficult to determine the level they started; however, the mean EOY scores show that there was no growth from MOY to EOY, the students were not at the expected Tier 1 level, and the students actually showed a negative growth in that the mean score for the EOY was less than the MOY for School One. On the contrary, at School Two the mean MOY assessment showed that the students were above the 3rd grade Tier 1 level at 243.8327. Additionally, the mean score for the EOY assessment showed that there was growth with a score of 247.7993, which is higher than is expected in Tier 1 for that grade level.

Table 26

Paired Samples Statistics IStation Mean

IStation results for growth	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Final_ISIPER_MOY_Score School One	22	233.8914	15.63734	3.33389
Final_ISIPER_EOY_Score School One	22	233.1805	15.09595	3.21847
Final_ISIPER_MOY_Score School Two	15	243.8327	12.24681	3.16211
Final_ISIPER_EOY_Score School Two	15	247.7993	10.78102	2.78365

Table 27 below provides a detailed assessment of the IStation results for growth between the schools. Additionally, student scores on the district approved assessment test were used to answer research questions one and two.

Table 27

Paired Samples Test for IStation - Significance

IStation results for growth	n	*t*	*df*	*Sig.*	*Mean Diff.*
Final_ISIPER_MOY_Score School One Final_ISIPER_EOY_Score School One	22	.515	21	.306	.71091
Final_ISIPER_MOY_Score School Two Final_ISIPER_EOY_Score School Two	15	1.947	14	0.036	3.967

Using a paired samples test for the IStation assessment, with p being less than .05, it was found that with School One, there was no significant difference between the score for the MOY and the EOY for the students, t (21) = .515, p = .306. Student scores at School Two, using the same analysis for the IStation assessment, with p being less than .05, it was found that there was a significant difference between the score for the MOY and the EOY for the students, t (14) = 1.947, p = 0.036. The teacher at School Two was able to move the students from one level to another, improving student achievement.

Research Question 3

Question 3. What was the relationship between a teacher being culturally responsive to students' needs and being identified as effective or highly effective? In order to answer this question, all preceding surveys were used to make this determination as well as a review of the teachers' previous year's teacher evaluation appraisal. Table 28 below shows that Teacher 1 was considered Effective, with a rating of 2.6 out of a 4.0 score (see appendix F for details regarding teacher effective. The

teacher at School Two was new to the district and had no summative rating from the district, but did provide, through self-report, the rating received from the previous district, which was Exceeds Expectations/Distinguished.

Table 28

Teacher Assessment Rating 2014 - 2015

Teacher	**Score**	**Rating**
School One	2.6	Effective
School Two*	*	Exceeds Expectations/Distinguished

*School District data; * Self-report - new teacher data were not available*

Additional Analyses

I was very interested in whether or not the Tier 1 cultural dimensions would have a strong bearing in determining how the students perceived their teachers. In order to further answer questions 1, 2, and 3, I did an analysis on the cultural dimensions from surveys 2 and 3 that were closely tied to Tier 1 dimensions of culture. Tier 1 dimensions are: expressive movement. communalism, orality, and verve. Verve, especially, has been tied to success in African American student achievement and classroom management (Carter, et. al, 2008; Larke, et. al. 1996). From the analysis below, it was determined that the teacher at School Two had a higher mean from students who perceived the teacher to be culturally responsive than the teacher at School One, but there was no significant difference between the two scores. As Table 29 below shows, the mean for School Two was higher at 3.18, while the mean for School One was 3.05. Using the t-test, it was determined that $p > .05$.

Table 29

Analysis of Students Using Tier 1 Metrics

Group Assignment	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
2.0	19	3.18421	.398278	.091371
1.0	21	3.05357	.638077	.139240

Table 30

Tier 1 Metrics Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Overall Mean	Equal variances assumed	5.27	.027	.767	38	.448	.131	.1703	-.214	.475
	Equal variances not assumed			.784	33.94	.438	.131	.1665	-.208	.469

Additionally, as previously stated, the school climate was low at both schools. In addition to the answers regarding how the students felt about the schools, both schools were located in financially challenged, schools and communities. Crime was extremely high in these communities. One of the schools was located in a neighborhood that had been identified as number four on the list of the 25 “most dangerous neighborhoods in

America." The other school was within the community holding number fifteen on the list of most dangerous neighborhoods the next year. These factors could greatly influence the students' perceptions of safety and school environment, as evidenced by their responses to the survey regarding not feeling safe at the school. Although out of the teachers' control, this information was used to find out how students felt about their environment.

Also, it cannot be stated enough that although there are characteristics of African American culture that can be readily identified, each student is an individual and should be treated as such. During the observations, it was clear that the teachers had an understanding of students as individuals, as well as students in a cultural environment.

Summary

The quantitative results chapter began with an introduction of the statistical test that would be analyzed and used. It also provided the order that the data would be presented. It began with demographic data on the students so that the reader would have a clear understanding of the types of students who would be participating. The demographic data were followed by an analysis of the surveys that were taken by both the students and the teachers. This chapter reintroduced the research questions and tied them to the results. Individual t-test of items, as well as mean assessments were completed to understand the students' perception of teacher cultural responsiveness and student achievement.

Results from the student surveys revealed that there was only a slight statistical difference between student perceptions of Teacher 1 and Teacher 2. The students rated

the teacher at School One slightly higher than they rated the teacher at School 2. These results were not necessarily surprising. An analysis of the qualitative data allowed me to gain insight into why students scored their teachers they way they did on the surveys and how what I observed could be interpreted based on the students' academic achievement (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). Addressed in the nine dimensions of African American culture as harmony and communalism, the students may have scored their teacher high so that I, as the researcher, would have a good impression of her or the female teacher may have been seen as a mother figure. A deeper dive into the Tiers of cultural dimensions was used to determine which teacher had a better understanding and grasp of the correct culturally responsive pedagogy needed to reach each student. A review of the student assessment data revealed that students at School Two outperformed the students at School One and had significant growth with the teacher. Results of the qualitative data analysis are presented in the following chapter (Hernandez, 2004, p. 122 as referenced in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

CHAPTER V

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA: QUALITATIVE

Introduction

This study intended to investigate the relationship between a teacher's cultural responsiveness and their African American students' achievement, especially in reading. The study also intended to determine if African American students' perceptions of their teachers as culturally responsive was linked to their achievement and if teachers of African American students are effective or highly effective based on their level of cultural responsiveness.

The observations of the classrooms were used to gather information from the teacher and the students regarding the research questions. From these observations, I was able to generate themes that emerged from the data tied to African American cultural dimensions and how students feel about their teachers. The themes that emerged are racial uplift, anxiety, communalism, movement expressiveness, orality, and verve. The observations also provided some perspective about how I felt the students may score on the upcoming state assessment based on the interactions of the teachers and students. Additionally, although I did not perform formal interviews of the teachers; the informal conversations and unstructured interviews (Creswell, 2003) allowed me to understand the teachers' perspectives, what they are trying to accomplish for their students, and how this information was tied to the research questions.

In addition to observing the teachers and students as they interacted with one another, I also used what I observed regarding how the students interacted with one

another. I also got a good sense of the area by driving around the community and walking around the school. The rationale for this was because the survey questions included questions about how they felt about the school, I thought it was a good idea to see the school for myself. Additionally, viewing the neighborhood community provided insights into the likely home lives of the students.

Qualitative Research Design

As previously stated, I wanted to be able to validate what the quantitative data was telling me by comparing it with what I was able to gather from the qualitative data through observations, unstructured interviews, and interactions with the teachers and students. In my role as district grant writer, I was constantly reviewing data. The data consistently showed me that in every grade level, on almost every test, African American students were not scoring as high on the state assessment as other students in the district. The gap between Black and White students continued to widen. In reviewing the data, the percentage of African American students in special education classes was disproportionately higher than other ethnic groups in the district, and disproportionately lower than other ethnic groups, except for Hispanic students, in gifted and talented G/T classes. The students had more than 50% of the discipline referrals, but made up only one quarter of the enrollment. As a former teacher of students of color that did well, as the mother of three successful college-educated children, as a grandmother of a child who was reading by age 3 (as my own children did), and as one who continues to interact with and support African American youth to make a difference in the world, these disparities disturbed me and I believed that there were strategies that

could be used that could turn around these statistics and produce high-achieving, well-rounded citizens of color.

Research Questions 1 and 3

Research Question 1 - What was the relationship between cultural responsiveness in teachers and their African American students' academic reading achievement?

Research Question 3 - What was the relationship between a teacher being culturally responsive to students' needs and being identified as effective or highly effective?

The final information used to determine cultural responsiveness were the classroom observations. Detailed accounting of what was observed in the classrooms is shown below. The theme of the classes revolved around racial uplift, anxiety, communalism, movement expressiveness, orality, and verve. In both classes, students worked in groups with other students under the guidance of the teachers (orality and communalism). Additionally, the teachers had several activities going on at one time in the classroom where the students had an opportunity to move from one group to another and interact with their peers (orality, verve, and movement expressiveness).

There were marked differences between the teaching styles of each teacher. Additionally, although it was obvious that both teachers wanted their students to succeed and do well, there was a difference in the rigidity of the classroom from one teacher to another. Both expected the students to behave well, and for the most part both sets of students did; however, in one class the students exhibited more comfortable behaviors with one teacher than the other. The behaviors that exhibited comfort, ease, and less

stress were noted as students, smiling, humming, and sitting on their knees in the chairs, as opposed to bottom in the chair. Those behaviors that exhibited discomfort were: furtive glances towards the teachers and more serious demeanors (anxiety), although this could be caused by the students making an extra effort to "be good" for the visitor in their teacher's classroom. Both sets of classrooms had student work exhibited on the walls and the rooms were decorated with college paraphernalia from well-known African American schools (racial uplift). The final observation that I had was the day of the final survey. By that time the students were familiar with me, as I had been a fairly silent fixture in their classrooms for a while. When I visited the classrooms, I sat in the back or on the side of the room. When I initially began the observations, the teachers of each class introduced me to the students and let them know why I was there. During my visits, the students would smile shyly at me or wave slightly. They eventually became used to seeing me there, so they were very responsive, cooperative, and well-behaved when I administered the test.

Before my initial observations, I met with each of the teachers. During these unstructured interviews, I was able to ask the teachers quite a few questions about who their students were. During this time, we also decided which group would be the best group of students to observe and why. Answers as to why ranged from: (a) the students were the most responsive; (b) the classrooms had more African American students than the other classrooms that they taught; (c) the classrooms were more diverse than the other classrooms that they taught; and (d) the teacher thought the students would be able to adjust well to having a stranger in the room, that they were "used to it." I also asked

how long each teacher had been in the profession and at the school. That is where I learned that one of the teachers was new to the school, although not new to the profession. The other teacher had been at the school for several years. I explained why I was there and that I was looking to find out whether or not the teachers were culturally proficient or responsive and I explained what that was. I purposefully did not ask the teachers about their teaching styles or any questions that I thought would make them feel intimidated by my presence. As an administrator from the central office, I did not want the teachers to feel as if I were evaluating them. Once I explained in detail what I was going to be doing during the next few months, we went over the protocols that I had established and the teacher consent forms. The teachers had an opportunity to ask me questions about the protocol and consent forms. During this meeting, the teachers signed the consent forms. The consent forms included permission to observe the classroom and to interview the teachers (see Appendix). We also identified the best dates and times for me to observe their classrooms. I did not perform any unscheduled observations. The observations were scheduled with and approved by the teachers and the school principals. The information that follows was used to determine the answers to research questions one and three. The themes that emerged (racial uplift, anxiety, communalism, movement expressiveness, orality, and verve) are highlighted near the area of the narrative where the theme was addressed.

School One Grade 3 Observation 1

About the school - School One Elementary School is located in the heart of Third Ward in Houston, Texas, an urban, high-poverty area of the city. It is located within the

zone of the zip code listed as number fifteen of the twenty-five highest crime zip codes in America. The community surrounding the school shows the poverty. Looking at the homes and areas around the school, you will note the "shotgun" houses, dilapidated buildings, and unkempt parts in the community. The school, itself is an older building, was originally built in the 1910's and received upgrades in the 1960's and a final one in 1980, but no additional upgrades have been done since then, and it shows the wear. In order to get into the building, you have to be beeped in. High, locked gates keep outsiders out and students in. Teachers' and administrators' cars are behind these high, locked gates as well.

When I entered the room, the students were sitting on the floor in the reading corner listening to the teacher read Charlotte's Web. I sat in a corner of the room so as not to disturb the classroom, but so that I could easily observe and hear what was going on in the classroom. The students were listening intently. One little boy called out about a distraction, but the teacher quickly rerouted him and kept reading. As the teacher read, the teacher stopped to ask the students questions. The students responded to her questions with their interpretation of what they thought was meant in the story. The teacher then allowed the students to "turn and talk" (orality; communalism) Then the teacher counted down to get their attention and answer the question. When the teacher asked the question again and the students' answers were not satisfactory, the teacher rephrased with, "Don't you think...," providing them with the correct answer in her question. The students stated yes. Another student gave his opinion. The teacher continued to read, the students listened. When this assignment was over, the students

went back to their seats. At this time, the teacher introduced me to the students. I asked her if I could speak to them. She said yes and I explained to the students why I was there, and thanked them for allowing me to observe them and for turning in the consent forms signed by their parents. I let them know that I would be back to observe again. I went back to my seat.

The class consisted of one African American female teacher and 7 African American boys, 12 African American girls, 1 Hispanic boy, and 2 Hispanic girls. The room is filled with students' work (racial uplift). There were a lot of book reports on tri-fold boards showing African American leaders such as Coretta Scott King, Elijah McCoy, and Madam C. J. Walker (racial uplift). The room was brightly colored. There was a t-shirt on the wall from Prairie View A. & M. University (racial uplift). The individual student desks were placed together in groups of four or five and facing each other (communalism). Although the teacher did not reference the students this way verbally, on the board were references to students as scholars (racial uplift).

On this particular day, a student was late to class. The teacher sharply asked the student "Where's your tardy pass? Where's your homework." He slunk to his seat. The students took a restroom break. They lined up according to the teacher's instructions. The teacher called them by name to allow them to get in the line. The students were not allowed to line up until the teacher called the student's name. The teacher gave them a new line order and they waited patiently while the teacher lined them up. The teacher turned on her timer to allow students to go to the restroom. They had to wait until every student had their arms folded in the school fold.

The students came back from their break. I was sitting at a desk in a student's seat, so I relocated to another area of the room so the student could have that seat. The students began a reading game, called Around the World. Although the game was called "Around the World," the students stayed at their desks in one location. The teacher passed around the instructions and the reading activity to the students. The teacher sat in a chair in the middle of the students. The teacher asked questions, the students called out answers. After instructions were given, the students read silently. The teacher let them know that the teacher was timing them and that they were to read by themselves. The teacher stood up to monitor the kids. The teacher walked around the room. The teacher put up a shield (a folder opened up like a sideways tent) in front of one of the male African American students who may have been distracted by or a distraction to (?) the students around him. The teacher walked over to one student and tapped her on the shoulder. The teacher did not say a word. The student stopped doing what she was doing and went back to work. The students continued to work.

The teacher turned on a projector in preparation of going over the information. Students read the front and back of the document in preparation for the discussion. The same little African American girl the teacher spoke to earlier, stood up to write her sections. The teacher walked over to her, but did not interrupt her. The little girl continued to read and work while standing (movement expressiveness).

Someone came in to speak with the teacher. The teacher explained what the students were doing to the person. The other person began walking around the room as well. The timer rang and the teacher began to ask questions about what they read. The

students participated and called out what they read. The teacher called on a particular student. One student received a warning for misbehaving. The students yelled out and the teacher asked them to raise their hands. The teacher called out students' names. Then the teacher gave them instructions on the game. Each table was to work with one another (communalism). They would have three minutes to answer questions. The students are engaged in the activity. Both teachers walked around to assist the students.

One student is assigned as the door opener. The students continue the conversation about what they read as they continued the reading game. The teacher continued to go from table to table, providing encouragement as needed. Then the assignment allowed the students to move around (movement expressiveness, verve). The students stand when they are done. Now the students move to another table. The teacher instructs them on where to go. The students move to the next table. They continue to discuss the information on the cards. The students are sitting comfortably on the chairs normally and on their knees. All students are engaged.

The teacher stepped out to talk to another teacher. The co-teacher continued to work with the students. The children moved around and got a little loud. The teacher walked back in the give them direction. The students quieted down. They stood next to their seats and moved to the next area. The students are reviewing the next section. A group of students had to be corrected by the teacher. The students calmed down and went back to work. The students are very noisy, and it could be interpreted as a good noise, except the teacher is talking over the students, and a couple of students are 'shhing' one another (anxiety). This goes on for quite a while. When I listened back to

the events on tape, there seemed to be a lot of noise, but not a lot of teaching and learning. Some of the students are standing at their chair desks, some of them are sitting down. All of them seem to be engaged.

School One Grade 3 Observation 2

When I come back for the second observation at the same School One of the same classroom of students, the students are working in stations. There are 16 students in the room at this time. Three Hispanic students, the rest are African American. Five of the students are working with the teacher, four of the students are getting books to read. Other students are working in pairs regarding the reading. The students seem engaged in the activity. The students have a rhythm in that they all seem to know that to do (verve).

There is a name on the board under "Detention" for a student who may have misbehaved. Most students are reading in pairs (communalism, orality). One student is reading alone. The room is bright and colorful. Words are all over the room. There is the hum of students interacting with one another.

The students switched and the group that was working with the teacher went to independent reading and another group of five students went to work with the teacher. *The floors could use a good cleaning. There is quite a bit of paper on the floor.*

The teacher made table assignments for the students. The students are working quietly on their assignment. They are free to walk around the room (communalism). There is an air of comfortableness in the room. The students are smiling and responding well to the teacher. *It is an older building. In order to get to the classroom, you have to*

access it directly from outside. Most of the shades in the room are down, however, there is one shade that is open. It looks out on the neighborhood street. Across the street is a dilapidated "shanty" or shotgun house with a lot of trash and junk in the yard. People are hanging out on the rickety porch. There are several houses in this same condition within eyesight of the students in the classroom.

Two little girls next to me are reading aloud in unison. When the teacher offers treats to the group, one of the students reading next to me got up to get another treat. The students working with the teacher were fully engaged. The teacher continued to allow the students to work quietly on their assignment. Periodically, the teacher asked the students a question related to the work. A couple of students expressed excitement regarding an answer.

One student has his head down on the desk. His hand had been raised earlier. The student may have been ill. His head was still down throughout the class period. He may have needed to use the restroom. When it was restroom time, he quickly moved to get in line to go to the restroom. The students line up to go to the restroom. When the students line up appropriately, the teacher praises the students and calls many of them by name. For those that are not conforming, she counts backwards. They eventually line up to go to the restroom.

School Two Grade 3 Observation 1

About the school - School Two Elementary School is located in a neighborhood in the southeastern part of Houston, Texas, another urban, high-poverty area of the city. It is located within the zone of the zip code listed as number four of the twenty-five

highest crime zip codes in America in the year before School One's neighborhood rating. The houses surrounding the school, although high poverty, do not show the poverty as the homes surrounding the previous school. Looking at the homes and areas around the school, you will note the small wood and brick homes, a few dilapidated buildings, and some unkempt parts in the community, but you have to go deeper into the neighborhood to see the real poverty. There are some businesses in the area, noted as barber and beauty shops, a soul food restaurant and barbeque place around the corner. The school, itself is an older building, was also originally built in the 1910's. During my research, I was unable to find out if additional upgrades or a newer building had been completed, but the building showed the wear. The school, facing a major street and surrounded by deep ditches, meant that you had to park in the school parking lot. In order to get into the parking lot, you had to be allowed in. High, locked gates keep outsiders out and students in. Teachers' and administrators' cars are behind these high, locked gates as well.

I arrived a little early, but when I walked in the room, the students were in groups, (literacy circles) with student-teachers or assistants helping some of the groups (communalism, orality). The teacher had the largest group. He was reading a story aloud to the children while they followed along. There were four stations. One was outside the door, where the students were sitting cross-legged with a student teacher and three stations were inside the classroom. The room was filled with children's work (racial uplift). The room was colorful and the students were focused. Although this was not the group of students that I would be observing, since I was there, I thought it would

be important for me to note how he treated all students.

Once the story was over, the teacher had the students share out what happened in the story (orality). The teacher was seated at the table with the students at first, but then moved around the table to hear their perspective. There were 16 students in the class on that day - 9 boys, 7 girls, 3 Hispanic, 1 White, 12 African American.

The students were fully focused on what the teacher was saying. They were sitting on their knees, on their bottoms, in ways that show their comfort level with the teacher (lack of anxiety). The students who were working with the teacher were fully engaged. The teacher referred to the students as scholars, friends, etc. (racial uplift).

Students in other groups were working on worksheets. Then they switched. The students the teacher was working with moved to another group (verve, communalism, orality, movement expressiveness). The teacher let the students know what would be happening next. The teacher moved to work with another group. Additionally, there were several teachers/facilitators in the room, including two college students, who moved to the student groups (communalism). The temperature was pleasant, not too hot or too cold. There was a fan in the corner of the room. The windows were closed.

The teacher praised the students for the work for that day. This group of students would be moving to another class. The teacher had the students thank the college students for coming to work with them that day. The college students left. The teacher had the students put the class back in order (harmony).

A new group of students entered the room. This was the group of students that I would be observing. The teacher allowed me to introduce myself. When I introduced

myself, I explained to the students why I was there, and thanked them for allowing me to observe them and for turning in the consent forms signed by their parents. Then the students from the tables sat on the reading rug to begin their lesson. In order to make the teacher look good, the students were very well behaved. The students shared out with their partners what they already know about fiction (orality, communalism). The students quietly talked to each other about it. Now the teacher had one aide/assistant helping him. The projector in the room had fallen down from the wall, so he created a screen for the information he wrote down for his students. These students were very intelligent. There were 18 students present. 10 girls and 8 boys. One Hispanic girl and one Hispanic boy. The rest of the students were African American. The students were dressed in their uniforms in the school color of beige, yellow, and black.

After the reading circle assignment, the students went quietly back to their seats. The teacher passed out their paper and provided instructions. The teacher went to each group to confirm that they understood the instructions (communalism). It is obvious that the teacher respects the students and they respect him. This was demonstrated by the teacher's demeanor towards the students and the fact that the teacher personally went to each student group's table to give them instructions. The teacher read a story aloud to the children while they followed along. All students were focused on reading silently. You could hear the pages turn as they moved through the passages. Some of the kids laughed at the funnier parts of the passage. Once the teacher finished reading the story, the teacher gave the children time to think so that they could share out. The teacher walked around providing support to the students. The teacher's assistant helped as well.

The teacher called the students by their names. Not only did the teacher tell them how to do it, but demonstrated it to them (modeling). The teacher allowed the students to do the work, then they shared out (orality). The teacher provided positive feedback to the students for their work and redirected them when they provided an incorrect answer. The class used a thinking map to identify characters and infer what was going on (scaffolding). The children are allowed to go to the restroom on their own. They would go to the area where the restroom pass was, pick it up, and go to the restroom. The rest of the class continued to work.

The students were free to move around (movement expressiveness). The room started to get warm. A couple of students began to fan. The teacher did a quick review by letting students share out what they learned. The teacher walked by each student to check for understanding. The teacher picked up the paper and asked the students to get in "test mode." The teacher provided instructions to the students. As the students took the test, the teacher walked around making positive comments to the students. The teacher turned the fan on and placed six minutes on the timer. The teacher continued to walk around the room. Students that completed the assignment were given activity packets for STAAR. Students had participated in several different activities during my visit (verve).

School Two Grade 3 Observation 2

The students were sitting on the ground on the reading mat around the teacher, who was also sitting on the floor. The subject matter was poetry. They were introduced to words like misconception and inference. The teacher was teaching about finding the

answer regarding how to answer the question. Two additional students were in the room that I previously observed bringing the total to 20 students. One of these students was a White female. The students were answering questions. A student misbehaved. The teacher waited until the students were focused on him. The teacher stated his expectation about behavior. The teacher modeled what was expected. The teacher introduced new words and explained what they meant. The teacher redirected students that were out of order. The students finalized the last work and moved to their tables for group work.

The students were divided into two groups (orality), both overseen by a teacher or an aide. One student was sitting to the side, apart from the other students. He is not interacting with other students. The student did not interact with anyone during my visit.

One student went to her backpack for something. The teacher asked her to be seated. She began to cry. The teacher acknowledged her distress and let her know that she would be assisted soon and would be able to get what she needed.

The teacher highlighted a student who was ready first. The students celebrated her by clapping under the direction of the teacher (communalism). The teacher provided instructions to the students about what they would be doing. The teacher had the class justify how they came up with their answer. The class was learning critical thinking. The students were sitting comfortably over the chairs. The teacher continued to refer to the students as scholars. The teacher allowed students to be facilitators (movement expressiveness, orality, communalism, verve). The teacher gave the strategies to the students. The teacher redirects students if they misbehave, calling them by first name.

Students are moving around (movement expressiveness). Two other students were on the floor.

The teacher had another person in the room, perhaps team-teaching or an aide. The students consistently worked together in teams (communalism, orality). The teacher asked the student facilitators to have the students share what they learned. The students got ready to go.

When I spoke with the teacher after the class during an unstructured interview, the teacher divulged to me that he had written a book on diversity and inclusion. I asked additional questions regarding his work. He explained that the book was one of the reasons why he wanted to move from the suburban school to the urban school. He stated he wanted to make a difference in the lives of students of color.

The Surveys

At School One, I asked the teacher to step out of the room while I spoke with the students about the surveys and what we were about to do. The students were very cooperative and quietly read the questions on the surveys silently while I read them aloud. The students were very well-behaved and each time several different students helped me collect the surveys before I left. I thanked them for their time and cooperation.

At School Two, the teacher was absent the day I gave the final surveys to the students. There were three adults in the room. I had seen them on other visits to the classroom, so I inferred that they were either aides or team teachers who took the class in his absence. On this particular day, the room was so hot that the students and teachers

were sweating. The air conditioner had ceased to work in this older, less up-to-date building. The adults in the room decided to move the students to a cooler location, which happened to be the library. Once we settled in the new location and I had passed out the survey, a fire alarm sounded and we had to go outside. It was obvious from the behavior of the students as we went outside and waited to re-enter that the teacher has instilled high expectations for the students. They were one of the better behaved students as they waited. Once we went back into the library, I passed the surveys out again. I had picked them up before we exited, just in case. Once the students had the surveys, as I did with the students in School One and each time they were given, I read the questions aloud while the students read them silently. Since the teacher was not present, I did not ask these adults to leave the room. Once I started reading the questions, one of the adults started walking around to see how the students were answering the questions. I should have asked them to step out of the room as I did with the teacher in School One; although her walking around did not seem to distract the students, but they were very interested in the results regarding how the students felt about their teacher. The students were very well-behaved and when the survey was completed, they helped me collect the surveys before I left. I thanked them for their time and cooperation. They continued with their lesson in the library.

Themes that Emerged

Racial uplift was observed through the artifacts in the classroom, including pictures of famous African American historical and current figures. It was also demonstrated through the posters from Historical Black Colleges and Universities

(HBCUs) around the room. Racial uplift was also demonstrated by the amount of student work on the walls and bulletin boards. Showing their work gave the students a sense of pride, much like the sense a child receives when the parent places the school work on the refrigerator door. The teacher at School Two frequently referred to the students as scholars. I noted that the teacher at School One used scholar on the board regarding the student objectives, but the teacher did not refer to the students as scholars. Both teachers did call students by name, both for positive and negative behaviors. As time progressed, and the teachers and students became more comfortable with me in the room as a level of trust had been established, one of the teachers spoke to a particular African American student in a negative way, telling the student to "shut up." I did not react.

Anxiety was observed from the students as they focused on the upcoming state assessment test. The teachers also seemed to be anxious as they pushed the students to understand the concepts better. The teacher at School Two introduced a larger quantity of higher order thinking skills strategies than did the teacher at School One. The students at School One seemed to be watching my reaction to their behaviors and the teacher more that did the students at School Two.

Communalism was demonstrated in the way that both rooms were set up. The students did not sit in desks, they sat at individual tables that when turned could allow the students to work in groups of four or more. Each time I observed the students, for the majority of the class period, the students worked in groups. Students were allowed to work together and interact with one another.

Orality was demonstrated through the opportunities that the students had to interact with and talk to their peers and the teachers regarding the assignments. Students worked together in teams, talking though the problem-solving activities with one another. Students being provided with opportunities to facilitate the work was also a good way to allow students to talk with one another in a constructive manner.

Movement expressiveness and verve were shown by the students being able to move freely about the room. The teacher created opportunities for the students to move around and interact with other students in the classroom. In order to keep the students from being bored, various activities were completed within the class period. Both teachers provided numerous activities per each class period.

Summary

This chapter provided the details of the qualitative information derived from the observations of the classroom and the unstructured interviews with the teachers. It highlighted the themes that emerged from this qualitative data of racial uplift, anxiety, communalism, movement expressiveness, orality, and verve. During the observation phase, the Teacher at School Two demonstrated more patience with the students and I was able to observe more culturally responsive teacher behaviors. I did not observe the Teacher at School Two raise a voice towards the students, although I did observe a sharpness of tone from the teacher at School One to the students. When that occurred, the student was very embarrassed. He went back to his table and put his head down on the desk. Overall, both of the teachers seemed to be culturally aware of their students, but from my observation, the teacher at School Two demonstrated more cultural

responsiveness in their interaction with the students than did the teacher at School One, by demonstrating the strategies of scaffolding and allowing the students to move around the classroom, as well as having several varied activities within the class period. As stated previously, the teacher at School Two had various other adults providing assistance. Because of this support, the students were able to move from table to table and group to group to complete different assignments. The majority of the time the teacher at School One was alone with the students, except for only one of the times that I observed the class, so the students had to work mostly in large groups or alone.

It was interesting to me to note that the students scored the female teacher as higher on the surveys although the female was more rigid. An example of the rigidity was the fact that the students at School One were not allowed to go to the restroom until all students were standing in line at the door with their hands in the school position. The students at School Two had the freedom to get the hall pass from the hook and go to the restroom on their own. The teacher at School One also raised her voice at the students and I did not note the teacher at School One raise his voice during my visit.

One critical fact that I found out on the last day of data gathering was that the teacher at School Two had written a book on cultural proficiency and inclusion! Although not surprising based on the student achievement exhibited by his students, I felt that was an important piece of information for me to know beforehand, although it allowed me to do the research without knowing that Teacher 2 could be considered an expert on cultural responsiveness and student achievement. The next chapter will

provide a discussion of the findings, implications for practices, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This final chapter provides a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research. The purpose of these sections is to provide a better understanding of the concepts and discoveries that were presented in the study. This section is meant to provide information on what this means to the education field in regard to improving academic achievement for African American and other students of color and the importance of having a culturally responsive educator teaching the students. This section will provide a culminating statement regarding the purpose of this study and what it attempted to find.

Summary of the Study

Students who do not read proficiently by the third grade have a higher dropout rate and a lower graduation rate than students who were reading proficiently by the third grade (Hernandez, 2011). The academic achievement of African American students has been discussed and considered to be a major concern of educators for many years (Fantuzzo, et al, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2009; Taylor, 2012; Webb-Johnson, 2010; Woodson, 1933). The growing achievement gap between African American students and White students, especially in reading, continues to widen (National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2013). In a large urban school district in Texas. the achievement gap between African American and White students in the third grade on the most recent administration of the state assessment in reading was 25

percentage points, 26 points in grade six, and by the time the students reached their first End of Course exam (EOC) at the end of ninth grade, the gap had grown to 32 percentage points.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore if there is a relationship between a teacher's cultural responsiveness and their African American students' achievement, especially in reading. Additionally, I wanted to determine if African American students' perceptions of their teachers as culturally responsive was linked to their achievement and if teachers of African American students are effective or highly effective based on their level of cultural responsiveness. I assumed that highly effective and effective teachers are more culturally responsive than teachers who are considered ineffective or highly ineffective.

Research Questions

Three specific research questions were answered in my study:

1. What was the relationship between cultural responsiveness in teachers and their African American students' academic reading achievement?

2. How were the perceptions of African American students of their teachers being culturally responsive related to their reading achievement as measured by district approved assessment tests?

3. What was the relationship between a teacher being culturally responsive to students' needs and being identified as effective or highly effective?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of culturally responsive pedagogy for this study was coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1995. Ladson-Billings stated that a culturally responsive pedagogy allows students to (a) experience academic success; (b) develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order" (p. 160). A culturally responsive teacher develops "personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that taken together, underlines effective cross-cultural teaching" (Diller & Moule, 2005, p.2) that effectively serves diverse students.

Methods

Purposive sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002) was used to choose the students to be studied and the schools they attended. The sample for this study was comprised of forty-two students in third grade reading classes at two predominately African American schools in similar racial, low socioeconomic neighborhoods. More than 85% of the students at these schools receive free- and reduced-meal prices in the school lunch program. The classrooms of students at these schools were selected primarily because of their low socio-economic status and high percentages of African American students enrolled. Three separate surveys were given to the students using a Likert scale with the choices of: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. The first instrument was a survey of student's perception of themselves as learners. The second and third instruments were surveys

used to determine students' perceptions of their teachers as culturally responsive. The fourth instrument was a survey taken by the teachers to determine how the teachers felt about their students and themselves. The teacher survey also used a Likert scale with the choices of: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. The fifth instrument used was the district approved student assessment tool through IStation. I also reviewed teacher evaluation/appraisal ratings. I performed a number of observations of the classrooms in order to compare what was stated on the survey instruments to what I observed in the class.

Findings

The first research question was answered using the results of the survey questions from survey instruments two and three. On each of the questions (14 in survey two and 12 in survey three), the students were asked to rate whether they agreed or strongly agreed or disagreed or strongly disagreed about the statement regarding their reading teacher as being culturally responsive. Question one was answered using mean and paired samples statistics. The mean was used to determine how the students felt about their teachers as culturally responsive teachers. An independent t-test was performed to answer the question. It was found that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of students from the surveys of their teachers at School one and School two using survey instruments two and three.

The second research question was answered using the MOY and EOY results of the district approved student assessment. Student scores at School Two, using the analysis for the IStation assessment, with p being less than .05, it was found that there

was a significant difference between the score for the MOY and the EOY for the students, $t\ (14) = 1.947,\ p = 0.036$. The teacher at School two was able to move the students from one level to another, improving student achievement. Based on the student scores on the MOY and EOY, the teacher at School one did not.

The third research question was answered using a review of the teachers' previous year's teacher evaluation appraisal. Teacher 1 was considered Effective, with a rating of 2.6 out of a 4.0 score (see appendix F for details regarding teacher effectiveness). The teacher at School Two was new to the district and had no summative rating from the district, but did provide, through self-report, the rating received from the previous district, which was Exceeds Expectations/ Distinguished. Exceeds Expectations/Distinguished is equivalent to Highly Effective in the current district.

Discussion of the Findings

When teachers understand African American culture, they can become more culturally responsive and meet the needs of African American students (Cole, 2008; Gay, 2010). This was a statement that I felt was true in the beginning, and I still feel it is true. Although there was only marginal significance in some areas and no significance in others based on the students' perceptions implied through their answers on the survey, the information gathered from this research was extremely important. The fact that the teacher who was able to get the most growth and student achievement from the students had received training on cultural proficiency and had written a book on diversity and inclusion (from a cultural perspective) demonstrates the importance of cultural proficiency. Although I did not know that the teacher had written this book until the end

of the study, it made an important point to me. In retrospect, I am glad that I did not know this information about the teacher; it may have tainted my opinion. As such, it only verified the need for and the importance of cultural proficiency training. Gloria Ladson-Billings in her article *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (1995) suggested that educational practices should match the children's culture. I believe that the teacher and the school leadership must ensure that the students are learning as they should be. Ladson-Billings places the responsibility of educating the youth on the teacher and does not make it the student's fault. She states that culturally responsive teachers should: (a) have good self-esteem; (b) be a part of the community (even if they do not live there); (c) give back to their community; (d) believe that all students can learn; (e) help students make connections to the world around them; (f) like teaching children (enjoy their work); and (g) know how to move students from one level to the next.

Williams (2015) stated that culture mediates learning, meaning that a teacher must understand the culture of the students so that they can reach the student in a manner that allows for high academic achievement. The teacher must talk to the students, even young ones, about racism and its impact on their lives (racial uplift). The teacher needs to talk to the parents to find out what their home life is like. Through my observations, it was apparent that the Teacher at School Two knew quite a bit about every child in the class, providing anecdotes and stories about many of the children in the room. I also had an opportunity to observe him interact with parents and the parents with their child.

The observations were critical to my findings. The comfort level of both teachers with their students demonstrated that they were used to the students; however, the teacher at School two knew who the students were. The teacher at School two knew who the students were regarding their home life and who was raising them. This teacher took time after school to tutor and work with the students. For example, during one of the after school tutorials, I walked downstairs with the teacher to wait for the parents to pick up their students. When the parent arrived, the teacher had a lengthy conversation with the parent, and it was obvious that the parent knew, respected, and listened to the teacher. I observed this interaction as they discussed how the student was doing and what would be needed for the student to be successful for the rest of the year. The student hearing the conversation understood two things: 1) the parent respected the teacher and 2) the teacher cared enough to mention challenges the student was having with the parent so that they can do better.

This interaction reminded me of when I was a teacher. I taught seventh grade at a low performing inner-city, urban school with high percentages of African American students. I remember the first week of school I contacted every parent, introduced myself, and said at least one nice thing about each child to the parent. This small contact helped me tremendously. First of all, it made a strong impact to the parent letting them know that I cared about their child and wanted their success. Secondly, it helped me to ensure that I had the correct contact information for each parent if I should need it later. Middle school students are notorious for giving false information. So if I did happen to get the wrong number, I would come back the next day and let each student know how

much I enjoyed talking to their parents and for those who had given me the wrong number I would state to the group, "Johnny, the number you gave me was to Jack-in-the-Box." The students would laugh, but I would get the right number and they understood that I valued connecting with their families. I would call periodically throughout the year, just to give parents an update and a good word about their students. It also gave me an advantage when the students misbehaved because I had already proven that I cared about the students and when I had to call parents regarding behavior, I would get results. Caring was critical. The ethic of care is necessary to infuse into the teaching. As Noddings (1984) states, the student must be more important than the subjects we are teaching them. Pang, et al (2011) connected the ethic of care to cultural responsiveness. Noguera (2003) notes that when teachers have supportive relationships with students, that include the ethic of caring and accountability, African American students can be successful.

The student ratings regarding school climate were concerning as well. In order to advance the academic success of the students in schools, it is incumbent upon the principal, as the instructional leader of the school, to ensure that the proper evidence-based pedagogical strategies, such as project-based learning, scaffolding, and differentiated instruction are used to increase the academic achievement of all students, including students of color. Rigor, relevance, and relationships are key to ensuring the success of African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2009), as well as the importance of community and family as contributing to the success of the students. It is also important that the students feel safe and supported. Although the principals were open

to allowing me to observe their teachers, I had little contact with the principals and rarely saw them other than to thank them for allowing me to come to their campuses to observe their teachers. In the surveys, a majority of the students did state that the principals know their names, but the students scored the school poorly in critical areas such as safety and peacefulness, and whether or not the students “get along” with one another.

Teachers who exhibit authentic caring "have high expectations and will settle for nothing less than high achievement" (Gay, 2010, p. 49). Many of the questions in the survey were related to caring. As previously stated, caring is not about lowering standards or allowing students to do less than others, it means making sure the curriculum is rigorous and that students have an opportunity to learn at the level where they are, and be treated as competent beings (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Gay, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2010). The expectations of the teacher, both low and high, make a difference as to whether the student feels he/she can excel (Cole, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Delpit, 1995, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The most important message that I received regarding the findings from this research is that students who are taught by a culturally responsive teacher can perform well and can become successful members of society. From the literature, I have learned that the culture of schools for students of color must be changed so that students begin to regard school as a place that will nurture and support them. Overwhelmingly, researchers continue to point to cultural relevancy, proficiency, and/or responsiveness as

one of the most important components of good teaching and being able to reach African American and other students of color and make a difference in their lives.

Implications for Practice

In the era of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), the focus is on providing success for every student. In the statute, several areas provide language related to making sure that all students are successful and have access to effective teachers, including:

> **‘‘(1) DESCRIPTIONS**.—Each State plan shall describe -
>
> ‘‘(B) how low-income and children of color enrolled in schools assisted under this part are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers, and the measures the State educational agency will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the State educational agency with respect to such (except that nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed as requiring a State to develop or implement a teacher, principal, or other school leader evaluation system);
>
> **‘‘SEC. 2001. PURPOSE.** ‘‘The purpose of this title is to provide grants to State educational agencies and subgrants to local educational agencies to—
>
> (4) Provide low-income and students of color with greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders.
>
> ‘‘(v) Developing, improving, and implementing mechanisms to assist local educational agencies and schools in effectively recruiting and retaining teachers, principals, or other school leaders who are effective in improving student

academic achievement, including effective teachers from underrepresented minority groups and teachers with disabilities..."

This language guides practice in that states and local education agencies must follow it. If African American and other students of color are to succeed, they must have access to effective and highly effective teachers. Teachers are by far the most powerful school-based factor in a student's academic success or failure. Well-prepared teachers and effective principals have strong influences on student achievement that can overcome other influences on the student, such as poverty, language background, and ethnicity (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

The findings of this study are important because they point to the fact that a teacher who is culturally responsive can make a strong academic impact on a child, especially African American and other students of color. The gaps in achievement between African American and other students have continued to widen. If more students had culturally responsive teachers who were effective or highly effective, I believe that the gap could close. Unfortunately, the majority of the schools where many African American and other students of color are low income, high-needs schools that many teachers choose not to go to teach. More teachers need to receive cultural responsiveness training in order to reach the students in their care.

It is critical for teachers to be cultural responsiveness towards their African American students in order to increase their academic achievement and is necessary for people to understand one another and be culturally responsive in everyday life. Most recently, race related police shootings, confrontations, and incidents involving people of

color, especially African Americans, has demonstrated that there is a strong need for people to understand the culture and behaviors of people of other races, especially people of color. If police officers understood the characteristics or dimensions of African Americans, for example, they would not fear or be intimidated if a young Black male approached him or her. In America, White privilege and equity issues have kept many African American and other people of color from excelling economically and educationally. If teachers and other authority figures would become culturally proficient and or responsive, there would be greater opportunities for African American and other people of color to excel.

The achievement gap continues to widen. And it will continue to widen as long as those in authority and in power do not make an effort to improve the lives of students by teaching in a culturally responsive manner. Teaching in a culturally responsive manner does not come automatically. Teachers must receive professional development, training, and other supports in order to know how to use this strategy well. Culturally responsive teaching is more than putting posters and pictures of prominent African Americans and other people of color on the walls of the classroom. It is more than allowing the students to use rhythm and music in their learning. It has more to do with knowing how to reach the students at a deeper level and helping them understand that what they are learning is practical for everyday use.

As previously stated, African American students learn better using scaffolding, differentiated learning, and project-based learning. They like to know that what they are learning can make a difference in their lives and in the lives of their families. African

American families are communal; therefore, it is important to include family and the community in the interactions with the students. Understanding the students and eliminating fear can greatly contribute to the success of the students. Students know, even at a young age, if the teacher does not like them, fears them, or looks down on them, and they act accordingly.

Teachers need to know how to redirect and guide the student to success. It can be done. Caring is one of the key factors in reaching these African American students. Another factor is realizing that although there are several dimensions of African American culture that each student is an individual and should be treated as such. Everyone wants to know that they matter. Teachers who help students understand that they can be successful and who demonstrate caring, will have more success with the student than the teacher who demonstrates that they have given up on the student and that they do not care about the student's educational future.

Recommendations for Further Research

The goal of this study was to determine if students perceived their teachers to be culturally responsive. This was determined through survey results and was tied to whether or not the students improved academically. The results demonstrated some differences, however no statistically significant differences were demonstrated on the perspectives of the students about their teachers and what was discovered regarding their academic achievement. The responses of students at both schools indicated that the students liked their teachers and that their teachers liked them. Although students at School Two had high academic achievement based on the district approved student

assessment and the other school did not, there were only minor differences in the mean of the perceptions of students from one school to the other. Additionally, the sample size was such that it may not have truly represented how students felt about their teacher. The student and teacher observations highlighted what the research of previous experts has shown, that a culturally responsive teacher can make a great difference in the lives of students. As stated previously, I saw indicators of cultural responsiveness such as scaffolding, group work, and allowing students to move around the room.

Although there was a strong attempt to ensure that the questions of the survey were on a third grade reading level, and I read the questions to the students, they still may not have fully understood each question. Additionally, because research does bear out regarding the teacher effectiveness and student achievement, different questions may have garnered different responses from the students. I will continue to pursue this research with larger groups at a later time, because it is imperative that educators understand the importance of being an effective or highly effective teacher who is also culturally responsive.

Additionally, I will pursue opportunities to write grants to support this research. The Department of Education, as well as other federal entities, including the Department of Justice and the Department of Labor continue to provide funding opportunities to advance all students, especially those that are behind academically. The Department of Education asks for innovative ideas that will close the achievement gap. The Department of Labor provides grant opportunities to enhance the educational capacity of the future workers in this diverse society. Many of these grants are focused on

increasing the academic achievement of their future workers, most of which will be non-White students based on the demographic shift of America. The Department of Justice, especially through the Department of Juvenile Justice, provides opportunities for school districts, foundations, and others to receive funding to support keeping students, especially students of color, out of the penal system through educational designs.

In September, 2016, XQ The Super School Project, a project founded by Laurene Powell Jobs, wife of the late Steve Jobs of Apple fame, through the Emerson Collective awarded ten grants to innovative schools in the America. These grants were in the amount of $10,000,000 to be used over a period of ten years. The purpose of this funding is to allow teachers, students, school leadership, parents, and community members to "reimagine' school. The projects are all focused on project-based learning, a key strategy for reaching African American and other students of color. The idea of this project is to help make school a place where kids want to be. The Ford Foundation has set aside millions of dollars to fund projects that support inequality, making a commitment to social change. Other grant opportunities of this type are available through other funding sources, both governmental, corporations, and foundations.

Conclusions

The findings of this study brought to light the necessity of ensuring that teachers are culturally responsive if the school districts have a real desire to make a difference in the lives of students. The investigation revealed that it is possible to move African American and other students of color from one level to another and close the achievement gap of these students. It revealed that something that was being done by

one teacher could be accomplished by other teachers. The literature suggests that a culturally responsive teacher can move the academic achievement level of students by understanding how they learn and knowing how to get this message across to students (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Williams, 2015).

The fact that the students of the teacher who was considered more culturally responsive did much better on the district-wide reading assessment and the state assessment than the students of the teacher who did not use as many of the strategies and ideals of cultural responsiveness points to a need for more professional development, training, and resources for teachers. Also as important, a greater percentage of students of the teachers from both schools scored higher than the school as a whole.

No longer can we state that "those children don't want to do better" or "those students can't do any better." It is incumbent on the teacher and the school leadership to ensure that students are taught in a manner that best suits how they learn best. Culturally responsive pedagogy is a key component to helping African American students succeed in school. This pedagogy must be based on the characteristics or dimensions listed by Boykins (1983) of (a) spirituality; (b) harmony; (c) affect/emotional expressiveness; (d) communalism; (e) movement; (f) verve; (g) expressive individualism; (h) orality; and (i) social time orientation. These characteristics are best demonstrated through project-based learning and other strategies that allow students to have a reason for or give meaning to what they are learning. These strategies must be shared with teachers in order for them to be done correctly; therefore, it is imperative that teachers and school

leaders receive professional development and training on how to implement these strategies.

Researchers continue to drive home the fact that rigor, relevance, and relationships are key to ensuring the success of African American students (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006, 2009; Noguera, 2003). Rigor, in that the work should not be watered down for the students, relevance, in that it should relate to the cultural dimensions of African American students and racial uplift, and relationships, in that the teachers should care more about the students that the subject being taught. It is possible to effective teach African American and other students of color.

The solution to this problem of practice can reduce the number and percentage of African American students being suspended and receiving other disciplinary infractions. It can reduce the percentage of African American students placed in special education and increase the percentage of African American students in G/T programs. A culturally responsive pedagogy, effectively used by a caring teacher, can close the achievement gap and level the playing field for all students.

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APPENDIX A

DISTRICT RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center
4400 West 18th Street • Houston, Texas 77092-8501

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

www.HoustonISD.org
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Carla J. Stevens
Assistant Superintendent
Research and Accountability Department
Tel: 713-556-6700 • Fax: 713-556-6730

November 23, 2015

Annetra Piper
615 Reva Ridge
Stafford, Tx. 77477

Dear Ms. Piper:

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is pleased to approve the study "Teaching Children of Color in America: Is Anybody Listening? Cultural Responsiveness and Reading Achievement of African American Students." The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of doctoral degree requirements at Texas A&M University. The study will explore the relationships between reading achievement and students' perceptions of their teachers as being culturally responsive. The projected date of study completion is June 30, 2016.

Approval to conduct the study in HISD is contingent on your meeting the following conditions:

- The target population is approximately 42 African American third-grade students and their teachers at Young and Blackshear elementary schools. The principals have provided written support for the study.
- Classroom observations will be conducted to document student and teacher interactions. Observations will occur twice during a semester for approximately one hour per session.
- Permission will be requested to audio-tape classroom observations.
- Signed, active consent is required of parents/guardians of students to participate in the study. Student assent is also required for student participation.
- Voluntary consent is required of teacher participants.
- Reading test data and teacher evaluation ratings will be requested from the HISD Department of Research and Accountability.
- The researcher must follow the guidelines of HISD and the Texas A&M University regarding the protection of human subjects and confidentiality of data.
- The HISD Department of Research and Accountability will monitor this study to ensure compliance to ethical conduct guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) as well as the disclosure of student records outlined in Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- In order to eliminate potential risks to study participants, the reporting of proposed changes in research activities must be promptly submitted to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability for approval prior to implementing changes. Noncompliance to this guideline could impact the approval of future research studies in HISD.
- The final report must be submitted to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability within 30 days of completion.

Any other changes or modifications to the current proposal must be submitted to the Department of Research and Accountability for approval. Should you need additional information or have any questions concerning the process, please call (713) 556–6700.

Sincerely,

Carla Stevens

CS: vh
cc: Andrew Houlihan
Adam Stephens
Grenita Lathan
Novelyn Watson-Robinson
Alicia Lewis

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form - Teacher

You are being asked to take part in a research study where I hope to learn if there is a relationship between African American students' perception of their teachers being culturally responsive and their reading achievement as measured by state and national standards. We are asking you to take part because you are a third grade Reading teacher on the campus and the focus for this study is third grade reading. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to determine if African American students' perception of their teachers being culturally responsive has an impact on their reading achievement as measured by state and national standards.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, we will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about your job, the students you teach, your environment, and your thoughts about teaching. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. With your permission, we would also like to tape-record the interview. I would also like to observe the classroom.

Risks and benefits:

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life." There are no benefits to you. Third grade is a critical time in the education of students, especially in reading and I hope to determine whether cultural responsiveness benefits them.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. If I tape-record the interview, I will destroy the tape after it has been transcribed, which I anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to

skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with your campus. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Annetra Piper. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Annetra Piper at apiper@houstonisd.org or at 713-556-6785. For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Research Protection Program office by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having any interviews and observations tape-recorded.

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to at least two classroom observations.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____ Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____Date _____

Cultural Proficiency Study – Parent Consent Form

INTRODUCTION

Your child has been invited to join a research study to look at the relationship between African American students' perception of their teachers being culturally responsive and their reading achievement as measured by state and national standards. Please take whatever time you need to discuss the study with your family and friends, or anyone else you wish to. The decision to let your child join, or not to join, is up to you.

The purpose of this study is to determine if African American students' perception of their teachers being culturally responsive has an impact on their reading achievement as measured by state and national standards.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY? Your child will be asked to take a survey and answer some questions about the teacher, the classroom, and the school. We think this will take him/her approximately 20 minutes. I will use several surveys that will be adapted to measure the information that will be studied and the age level of the students. These surveys will use a Likert scale, with the choices of: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree. I will also use the state assessment, called the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness or STAAR. I will spend time in the classroom doing observations of the teacher's classroom teaching style and pedagogy. There are certain culturally responsive clues that I will be looking for. In addition to viewing how the teacher interacts with the students, I will also observe the artifacts around the room in the form of culturally relevant literature (books and pictures) and evidence of student work. I will perform two observations per classroom.

I will hand out the surveys to each student. I will read the questions of the survey to the students, while they read them silently, so that there is no misunderstanding of what is asked. The students will be asked to place the number that matches their answer in the box next to the question. When the survey is over, the students will fold the paper in half and return it to me. The teacher will not view the survey and will not find out the answers to the surveys until after the semester ends so that it will not impact the student’s relationship with the teacher. Additionally, I will ask that the students do not place their names on the surveys so that they cannot be identified. There will be a total of three surveys given within this time frame. The surveys should take approximately seven minutes each. I will return at a later date to complete the survey again after I have observed the class. The teacher will know why I am there. It is hopeful that the cultural responsiveness of the teacher will increase and the students will perform better in class. This study will take approximately four months. As previously state, I will observe the classroom.

The investigators may stop the study or take your child out of the study at any time they judge it is in your child’s best interest. They may also remove your child from the study for various other reasons. They can do this without your consent.

Your child can stop participating at any time. If your child stops he/she will not lose any benefits.

RISKS This study involves the following risks:

Rare: The teacher's behavior towards the class may change. Although it is very unlikely because the teacher will not receive the outcomes from the class and no student will be independently identified. Other risks of this study include a limited amount of time taken during the class time. There are not physical risks of participating in the study above.
There may also be other risks that we cannot predict.

BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY? It is reasonable to expect the following benefits from this research: The teacher-student relationship may improve based on the teacher understanding the benefits of being culturally responsive. However, we can't guarantee that your child will personally experience benefits from participating in this study. Others may benefit in the future from the information we find in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY Your child's name will not be used when data from this study are published. Every effort will be made to keep clinical records, research records, and other personal information confidential. We will take the following steps to keep information confidential, and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage: At all phases of the data collection, the identities of the students and teachers will be protected and confidentiality will be ensured. No identifier of the students or teachers will be used, whether by school ID, social security number, or name, and none of the student or teacher identification information will be included in the study. The data will be entered into a computer program and the information will be aggregated and/or disaggregated according to how the data will be used. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

INCENTIVES There are no incentives for participating in this study. There may be a pizza party provided at the end of the year as a thank you, but not as an incentive for participating.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT? Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child has the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is entitled, and it will not harm his/her relationship with the researcher, the teacher, the principal, or other students. If your child decides to leave the study, the procedure is: They will not be asked to complete the survey. The student will be given another activity (reading a book or other academic activity) until the survey is complete. Any interactions observed between the teacher and the student will be noted for the teacher, but not for the student.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS? The researcher conducting this study is Annetra Piper. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Annetra Piper at apiper@houstonisd.org or at 713-556-6785. For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human

Research Protection Program office by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. Please call the IRB at the number above or go to the website if you have questions about the study, any problems, if your child experiences any unexpected physical or psychological discomforts, any injuries, or think that something unusual or unexpected is happening.

Permission for a Child to Participate in Research

As parent or legal guardian, I authorize _____ (child's name) to become a participant in the research study described in this form.

_____ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of my child during my participation in this research study.

_____ I do not give my permission for audio recordings to be made of my child during my participation in this research study.

_____
Child's Date of Birth

_____
Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature Date

Upon signing, the parent or legal guardian will receive a copy of this form, and the original will be held in the subject's research record.

Cultural Proficiency Study – Student Assent Form

Dear: _____:

My name is Mrs. Piper. I am a graduate student at Texas A & M University, at College Station. I am conducting a study to find out how you feel about your reading teacher. If you agree, you will be asked to take a survey and allow me to watch you in your class. It will help your teacher and I find out what will help you do better in school. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.

I will be able to see the answers to your survey. Your teacher will also see them, but not until the end of the school year. Your parents will be allowed to see them too. I will keep all of your answers in a safe place, and will not allow anyone to know your answers. I will give you an ID number that they will not know.

You do not have to be in this study and no one will be mad at you if you decide to not participate. Even if you start the study, you can stop at any time and no one will be mad. Here is my information: Mrs. Annetra Piper, 713-556-6785, apiper@houstonisd.org. You may ask questions about the study at any time. You can email or call me, or talk to your principal about it.

Please answer one of the questions below:

_____YES. I want to be in the study. I understand the study will be done during reading class time. I understand that even if I check "yes" now, I can change my mind later.

_____ NO. I do not want to be in the study.

Child's name: _____

Signature: _____

By filling out the survey/questionnaire and returning it to Mrs. Piper you are willing to be in this study.

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Survey Instrument 1: Student's Perception of Themselves as Learners

Answer the questions below using the Likert scale on whether you feel:
4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

Question	Rating
1. I like myself.	
2. I think I am smart.	
3. I think my teachers think I am smart.	
4. I feel that my teachers like me.	
5. My parents are proud of me.	
6. I feel I am able to do things as well as most people.	
7. I always know the answer when the teacher calls on me.	
8. I feel like others trust me.	
9. I feel comfortable being a leader.	
10. I make good grades in school.	
11. I like to be the center of attention.	
12. I have a lot of friends.	

Adapted from Dr. Zeenat Ismail, International Journal of Business and Social Science, 2011.

Survey Instrument 2: Student's Perception of Teachers' Attitudes

Answer the questions below using the Likert scale on how you feel about your teacher: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

Question	Rating
1. I think my teacher likes this school.	
2. I think my teacher likes me.	
3. My teacher talks to all the students in the class in a nice way.	
4. I think my teacher wants me to learn.	
5. I feel that my teacher is happy when I am good in class.	
6. I feel my teacher wants me to do good in class.	
7. My teacher does not mind answering my questions.	
8. I learn when my teacher teaches me.	
9. I feel my teacher likes to teach.	
10. I feel I can use what I am learning.	
11. My reading teacher helps me do better.	
12. I feel happy in my reading classroom.	
13. My reading teacher likes to hear what I have to say.	
14. My reading teacher is sad when I do not do well.	

Adapted from: Instrument created by Kenyetta Quenishia Nelson-Smith in her dissertation, 2002 and Dr. Zeenat Ismail, *International Journal of Business and Social Science, 2011*

Survey Instrument 3: Students' Perception of the Learning Environment

Answer the questions below using the Likert scale on how you feel about school:
4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

Questions - Students' Perceptions of Teaching Method	**Rating**
1. My teacher calls on all students during reading time.	
2. My teacher likes me to work with others.	
3. My reading teacher helps me in a way that does not shame me.	
4. My teacher helps me to learn how to read.	
Questions - Students' Perceptions of Classroom Management	**Rating**
1. My teacher keeps the classroom neat and clean.	
2. My teacher treats everyone in the classroom the same way.	
3. The rules for everyone in the class are the same.	
4. My teacher makes it easy to read in reading class	
Questions - Students' Perceptions of School Climate	**Rating**
1. My school is quiet and peaceful.	
2. Most of the students at my school get along.	
3. The principal knows my name.	
4. I feel safe at my school.	

Adapted from Dr. Abiola article, Journal of Educational and Social Research, 2013

Survey Instrument 4: Teachers' Perception of Themselves as Teachers

Answer the questions below using the Likert scale on how you feel about teaching:
4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

Question	Rating
1. I enjoy teaching my students.	
2. I think all students can learn.	
3. I think it is important to introduce students to different cultures.	
4. I feel that my students like me.	
5. My classroom is a place of learning.	
6. I feel that my students love to read.	
7. I feel that I reach all of the students.	
8. I feel like my students trust me.	
9. I feel comfortable pushing the students to higher levels.	
10. I feel comfortable teaching all aspects of the curriculum.	
11. I think I have all of the professional development that I need.	
12. There is a network of support for me at the school	
13. I have a good relationship with the students' parents.	
14. I feel comfortable being evaluated by others.	
15. There are very few discipline problems in my classroom.	

The question below requests that you fill in the blank.

I have written less than _____ discipline referrals this year.

APPENDIX D

EXTERNAL VALIDITY STUDY: ISTATION/STAAR

istation's Indicators of Progress

Early Reading

Reliability and Validity Evidence

istation Research Report 2009-01

Rev C

August 2009

800 E Campbell Rd, Ste 224
Richardson, TX 75081
(866) 883-READ
info@istation.com

Summary

During the 2008-09 school year, a validity and reliability study using ISIP™, istation's Indicators of Progress, computer adaptive reading assessment program was conducted in five elementary schools from a north Texas school district. Data were examined for internal consistency, test-retest reliability, concurrent validity with external measures, including DIBELS, TPRI, AND ITBS, and predictive validity with TAKS. Results show moderate to strong evidence of reliability and validity with regards to phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Conducting the study was Dr. Patricia Mathes, Texas Instruments Foundation Chair in Reading Research and Director of the Institute for Reading Research at Southern Methodist University.

Correspondence concerning the study should be addressed to Dr. Patricia Mathes, The Institute for Reading Research, Southern Methodist University, Post Office Box 750381, Dallas, Texas 75275-0381. E-mail: PMathes@smu.edu

Acknowledgments: The current study was conducted through the generous support of the Today Foundation.

Correspondence concerning this report should be addressed to Dr. Kevin E. Kalinowski, Director of Research, istation, 800 East Campbell Road, Suite 224, Richardson, Texas 75081. E-mail: KKalinowski@istation.com

istation Indicators of Progress Early Reading
Reliability and Validity Evidence

ISIP™, istation's Indicators of Progress, is a computer adaptive continuous progress monitoring assessment of critical reading skills. In addition to overall reading ability, ISIP measures abilities in the key reading areas of phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, fluency with text, vocabulary, and comprehension, as outlined by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). ISIP is Internet-based and can be administered individually or as a group. As an engaging computer animated program, ISIP eliminates human error and subjectivity. Furthermore, ISIP provides immediate feedback for differentiated tiered instruction.

IRT-based CAT

During the 2007-08 school year, a two-parameter logistic item response theory (2PL-IRT) calibration study was conducted with early reading assessment items developed by Drs. Patricia Mathes and Joe Torgesen in the areas of Phonemic Awareness (PA), Letter Knowledge (LK), Alphabetic Decoding (AD), Spelling (SPL), Vocabulary (VOC), and Reading Comprehension (CMP). The study resulted in a pool of 1,550 Kindergarten through Grade 3 items with reliable discrimination and difficulty parameter estimates aligned on a common scale ranging from 140 to 320.

Subsequently, the items were encoded into a computerized adaptive testing (CAT) version of ISIP, called ISIP Early Reading. ISIP Early Reading dynamically presents the most informative item to students based on how well the item's difficulty matches the student's ability. When the standard error of the estimate falls below a preset threshold, the testing administration stops, and final estimates of ability are computed, one for each of the six reading ability subtests, plus an overall reading ability.

Current Study

To establish reliability and validity evidence, data were collected during the 2008-09 school year at five elementary schools (A-E) from a large north Texas independent school district, which was different from the district used in the IRT calibration study. Demographics of the study participants are found in Table 1.

Table 1
Student Demographics

	Grade Level					
	K	*1*	*2*	*3*	*K-3*	
Students	122	103	95	96	416	
By School						
A	20	16	15	19	70	(16.8%)
B	21	15	18	18	72	(17.3%)
C	43	37	36	16	132	(31.7%)
D	17	15	11	12	55	(13.2%)
E	21	20	15	31	87	(20.9%)
By Gender						
Male	68	55	52	40	215	(51.7%)
Female	54	48	43	56	201	(48.3%)
By Ethnicity						
African American	21	28	17	10	76	(18.3%)
Caucasian	48	31	32	18	129	(31.0%)
Hispanic	40	38	40	65	183	(44.0%)
Asian	13	6	4	3	26	(6.3%)
Other	0	0	2	0	2	(0.5%)
Qualifying for Free/Reduced Lunch	63	52	44	73	232	(55.8%)
Qualifying for ESL Services	20	15	13	27	75	(18.0%)
Receiving ESL Services	17	15	10	25	67	(16.1%)
In a Bilingual Classroom	0	0	0	32	32	(7.7%)
Receiving Special Ed Services	1	5	6	7	19	(4.6%)

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100% for a given category due to rounding.

Seven thirty-minute testing sessions occurred every two weeks between October and February. For each session, students were escorted by trained data collectors from Southern Methodist University (SMU) in convenience groupings to the school's computer lab for sessions on the CAT-based ISIP Early Reading program. On average, six items were needed per subtest to establish an ability estimate with a standard error below the threshold, resulting in 13-18 minute ISIP testing sessions, depending on the number of skills assessed. The remaining time in each session was spent administering external measures. A seven group Latin squares design was utilized to reduce ordering effect. Students were given assessments for reading skills appropriate for their age as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2
Assessments Administered by Grade

	ISIP							DIBELS					
Grade Level	*PA*	*LK*	*AD*	*SPL*	*TF*	*CMP*	*VOC*	*PSF*	*NWF*	*ORF*	*TPRI*[a]	*ITBS*[a]	*TAKS*[a]
K	X	X	X				X	X	X		X		
1	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
2			X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
3				X	X	X	X			X			X

[a]Tests administered by the district.

The *Texas Primary Reading Inventory* (TPRI; Texas Education Agency, 1998) was administered to all Kindergarten students by the district three times during the school year, beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and end of the year (EOY). The *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (ITBS; Hoover, Dunbar, & Frisbie, 2007) was administered by the district in October to all students in Grades 1 and 2. The *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills* (TAKS; Texas Education Agency, 2003) was administered by the district in October to all students in Grades 3. These data for students in the current study were provided by the district at the end of the school year.

In addition to ISIP Early Reading, SMU data collectors administered *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy* (DIBELS; Kaminski & Good, 1998) Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments. Furthermore, one or more additional external measures were administered during each session. These additional assessments include well known instruments in Phonemic Awareness: *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processes* (CTOPP; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1999); Letter Knowledge: *Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery-Revised* (WLPB-R; Woodcock, 1991); Alphabetic Decoding: *Test of Word Reading Efficiency* (TOWRE; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1999), WLPB-R, and *Wechsler Individual Achievement Test* (WIAT-II; Wechsler, 2005); Spelling: *Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement* (WJ-III ACH; Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) and WIAT-II; Vocabulary: *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (PPVT-III; Dunn & Dunn, 1997) and WLPB-R; and Comprehension: *Gray Oral Reading Tests* (GORT-4; Wiedeholt & Bryant, 2001), WLPB-R, and WIAT-II.

Reliability Evidence

Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha is often used as an indicator of reliability across test items within a testing instance. However, alpha assumes all students in the testing instance respond to a common set of items. Due to its very nature, students taking a CAT-based assessment, such as ISIP Early Reading, will receive a custom set of items based on their initial estimates of ability and response patterns. The IRT analogue to classical internal consistency is marginal reliability (Bock & Mislevy, 1982). In essence, marginal reliability is a method of combining the variability in estimating abilities at different points on the ability scale into a single index. Like Cronbach's alpha, marginal reliability is a unitless measure bounded by 0 and 1, and it can be used with Cronbach's alpha to directly compare the internal consistencies of classical test data to IRT-based test data. ISIP Early Reading has a stopping criteria based on minimizing the standard error of the ability estimate. As such, the lower limit of the marginal reliability of the data for any testing instance of ISIP will always be approximately 0.90.

To establish test-retest reliability evidence, Pearson product moment correlation coefficients between ISIP Early Reading administrations were computed. Results for overall reading ability range from 0.927 to 0.970 (N = 416) across all seven sessions spanning from October to February. Table 3 shows the individual test-retest reliability results for overall reading ability.

Table 3
ISIP Early Reading Overall Reading Test-Retest Reliability[a] between Testing Sessions

	Oct 20	Nov 3	Nov 17	Dec 8	Jan 12	Jan 26	Feb 9
Oct 20	---						
Nov 3	0.970	---					
Nov 17	0.962	0.975	---				
Dec 8	0.947	0.962	0.969	---			
Jan 12	0.946	0.963	0.964	0.960	---		
Jan 26	0.936	0.956	0.962	0.960	0.963	---	
Feb 9	0.927	0.945	0.951	0.949	0.958	0.961	---

[a]Pearson product moment correlations (r).
Note. Sessions were two weeks in length and started on the date indicated.

Validity Evidence

Content validity was established through a series of steps to substantiate the test development process. First, early reading content experts, Drs. Patricia Mathes and Joe Torgesen, created ISIP Early Reading assessment items in key developmental areas, as suggested by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Next, the items underwent review by a panel of reading specialists. Then, the items were operationally used in a previous version of ISIP and revised as necessary. For ISIP Early Reading, the items were calibrated under a 2PL-IRT model. Finally, item parameters were examined and those items with unacceptable fit statistics with regards to the subtest to which they measured were removed from the pool. Based on the combined processes used to establish content validity, the items in the operational pool grouped by subtest are believed to be accurate representations of the domain in which they intend to measure.

Concurrent validity evidence was established by computing Pearson product moment correlation coefficients between ISIP Early Reading subtests and appropriate external measures. Table 4 shows results by grade level. During each of the seven testing sessions, both ISIP Early Reading and DIBELS were administered to the students in the study. Pearson correlations between DIBELS and ISIP Early Reading are shown in Table 5. Prior to testing, the SMU testers were trained on administering DIBLES. Inter-rater reliability was ensured during training so that no more than a two point difference in scoring occurred between testers.

The *Texas Primary Reading Inventory* (TPRI; Texas Education Agency, 1998) was administered to all Kindergarten students by the district three times during the school year, beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and end of the year (EOY). Data for students in the current study were provided by the district at the end of the school year. It is unknown when these testing administrations occurred, so data from the most appropriate ISIP Early Reading testing sessions were used in the comparisons. The study concluded in February, so correlations for EOY (presumably administered in May) were not performed. Pearson correlations between TPRI subtests and ISIP Early Reading subtests for BOY and MOY are found in Table 6. The training and inter-rater reliability of the district testers is unknown.

The *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (ITBS; Hoover, Dunbar, & Frisbie, 2007) was administered by the district in October to all students in Grades 1 and 2. Data for students in the current study were provided by the district at the end of the school year. Pearson correlations between ITBS Reading and ISIP Early Reading overall reading ability scores are shown in Table 7.

To establish predictive validity evidence, Pearson correlations between ISIP Early Reading overall reading ability and the state-mandated *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills* (TAKS; Texas Education Agency, 2003) were computed for Grade 3. Results are found in Table 8. TAKS was administered by the district in March.

Table 4

Correlations[a] *between External Measures and ISIP Early Reading Subtest Scores for Grades K-3*

ISIP Early Reading Subtest	*External Measure*		*K*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*K-3*
			Grade Level				
Phonemic Awareness (PA)							
	CTOPP Blending Words	*r*	**.688**	**.431**			**.702**
		N	120	100			220
	CTOPP Blending Non Words	*r*	**.676**	**.336**			**.650**
		N	120	100			220
	CTOPP Segmenting Words	*r*	**.644**	**.344**			**.620**
		N	122	101			223
	CTOPP Sound Matching	*r*	**.624**	**.474**			**.662**
		N	122	101			223
Letter Knowledge (LK)							
	Letter Names	*r*	**.593**				**.593**
		N	121				121
	Letter Sounds	*r*	**.693**				**.693**
		N	121				121
	WLPB-R Letter Word Identification	*r*	**.711**				**.711**
		N	120				120
Alphabetic Decoding (AD)							
	TOWRE Phonemic Decoding	*r*	**.582**	**.679**	**.539**		**.838**
		N	122	103	93		313
	TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency	*r*	**.583**	**.626**	**.586**		**.811**
		N	120	100	93		313
	WLPB-R Word Attack	*r*	**.535**	**.701**	**.702**		**.830**
		N	122	102	94		316
	WIAT-II Target Words	*r*		**.624**	**.507**		**.589**
		N		101	92		193
Spelling (SPL)							
	WJ-III ACH Spelling	*r*		**.800**	**.823**	**.798**	**.890**
		N		103	94	96	293
	WIAT-II Spelling	*r*		**.726**	**.774**	**.788**	**.875**
		N		101	91	96	288
Fluency with Text (TF)							
	DIBELS ORF[b]	*r*		**.741**	**.667**	**.627**	**.766**
		N		103	92	94	289
Comprehension (CMP)							
	GORT-4 Comprehension	*r*		**.456**	**.354**	**.473**	**.621**
		N		102	95	94	291
	WLPB-R Comprehension	*r*		**.707**	**.597**	**.569**	**.794**
		N		102	92	93	287
	WIAT-II Reading Comprehension	*r*		**.630**	**.554**	**.596**	**.682**
Vocabulary (VOC)							288
	PPVT-III	*r*	**.687**	**.696**	**.582**	**.785**	**.814**
		N	121	101	94	95	411
	WLPB-R Vocabulary	*r*	**.368**	**.656**	**.702**	**.716**	**.836**
		N	121	103	94	96	414

[a]Pearson product moment correlations (*r*). [b]Feb 9 session data used for correlations.

Note. Empty cells indicate no students were administered that instrument for that grade level.

Table 5

Correlations[a] *between DIBELS Scores and ISIP Early Reading Subtest Scores for Grades K-3*

		PSF[b]					*NWF*[c]					*ORF*[d]				
Testing		*Grade Level*					*Grade Level*					*Grade Level*				
Session		*K*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*K-3*	*K*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*K-3*	*K*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*K-3*
Oct 20	*r*	**.645**	**.476**			**.707**	**.454**	**.434**	**.375**		**.724**	**.657**	**.699**	**.811**	**.826**	
	N	98	92			190	96	94	84		274	87	81	73	241	
Nov 3	*r*	**.612**	**.388**			**.678**	**.432**	**.519**	**.497**		**.794**	**.593**	**.711**	**.709**	**.794**	
	N	121	103			224	121	103	93		317	100	93	91	284	
Nov 17	*r*	**.712**	**.365**			**.711**	**.578**	**.571**	**.524**		**.807**	**.656**	**.735**	**.733**	**.827**	
	N	121	102			223	121	102	93		316	102	93	96	291	
Dec 8	*r*	**.649**	**.406**			**.649**	**.574**	**.636**	**.607**		**.820**	**.640**	**.682**	**.619**	**.752**	
	N	121	102			223	121	102	92		315	101	93	94	288	
Jan 12	*r*	**.624**	**.238**			**.558**	**.605**	**.490**	**.649**		**.802**	**.590**	**.707**	**.601**	**.748**	
	N	120	102			222	120	102	86		308	102	91	95	288	
Jan 26	*r*	**.532**	**.171**			**.478**	**.547**	**.593**	**.514**		**.780**	**.661**	**.708**	**.647**	**.777**	
	N	121	102			223	121	102	91		314	102	91	94	287	
Feb 9	*r*	**.496**	**.253**			**.517**	**.597**	**.539**	**.438**		**.764**	**.741**	**.667**	**.627**	**.766**	
	N	122	102			224	122	103	92		317	103	92	94	289	

[a]Pearson product moment correlations (*r*). [b]ISIP Early Reading PA subtest scores used for correlations. [c]ISIP Early Reading AD subtest scores used for correlations. [d]ISIP Early Reading TRM subtest scores used for correlations.

Note. Empty cells indicate no students were administered that instrument for that grade level.

Table 6

Correlations[a] *between TPRI Subtest Scores and ISIP Early Reading Subtest Scores for Kindergarten*

		Phonemic Awareness[b]					*Graphophonemic Knowledge*[c]	
		Rhy[d]	*BWP*[e]	*BP*[f]	*DIS*[g]	*DFS*[h]	*LNI*[i]	*LtSL*[j]
BOY[k]	*r*	**.475**	**.557**	**.555**	**.483**	**.404**	**.728**	**.561**
	N	109	97	91	88	88	109	97
MOY[l]	*r*	**.334**	**.598**	**.602**	**.575**	**.558**	**.629**	**.551**
	N	109	101	98	97	88	109	106

[a]Pearson product moment correlations (*r*). [b]ISIP Early Reading PA subtest scores used for correlations. [c]ISIP Early Reading LK subtest scores used for correlations. [d]Rhyming. [e]Blending Word Parts. [f]Blending Phonemes. [g]Deleting Initial Sounds. [h]Deleting Final Sounds. [i]Letter Name Identification. [j]Letter to Sound Linking. [k]ISIP Early Reading Nov 17 session data used for correlations. [l]ISIP Early Reading Jan 12 session data used for correlations.

Note. TPRI administered by the district. It is unknown when in the school year TPRI was administered, by whom, or under what conditions.

Table 7

Correlations[a] *between ITBS Reading Scale Scores and ISIP Early Reading Overall Reading Scores for Grades 1 and 2*

Testing Session		*Grade Level* 1	2	1-2
Oct 20	*r*	**.807**	**.845**	**.895**
	N	62	75	137
Nov 3	*r*	**.808**	**.821**	**.884**
	N	65	78	143
Nov 17	*r*	**.793**	**.839**	**.888**
	N	65	78	143
Dec 8	*r*	**.806**	**.741**	**.845**
	N	65	78	143
Jan 12	*r*	**.748**	**.837**	**.874**
	N	64	78	142
Jan 26	*r*	**.725**	**.806**	**.854**
	N	65	78	143
Feb 9	*r*	**.699**	**.768**	**.829**
	N	65	77	142

[a]Pearson product moment correlations (*r*).

Note. ITBS administered by the district in October.

Table 8

Correlations[a] *between TAKS Reading Scale Scores and ISIP Overall Reading Scores plus DIBELS ORF Scores for Grade 3*

Testing Session		*ISIP Overall Reading*	*DIBELS ORF*
Oct 20	*r*	**.740**	**.630**
	N	64	60
Nov 3	*r*	**.741**	**.551**
	N	74	75
Nov 17	*r*	**.698**	**.598**
	N	77	77
Dec 8	*r*	**.695**	**.450**
	N	77	76
Jan 12	*r*	**.698**	**.582**
	N	76	77
Jan 26	*r*	**.741**	**.555**
	N	74	75
Feb 9	*r*	**.710**	**.533**
	N	77	76

[a]Pearson product moment correlations (*r*).

Note. TAKS administered by the district in March.

Discussion

Reliability and validity are two important qualities of measurement data. Reliability can be thought of as consistency, either consistency over items within a testing instance or over scores from multiple testing instances, whereas validity can be thought of as accuracy, either accuracy of the content of the items or of the constructs being measured. In this study, both qualities were examined using ISIP Early Reading data collected from Kindergarten through Grade 3 students in north Texas elementary schools during the 2008-09 school year.

Regarding measures of reliability, the data from the current study suggest consistently high levels of internal consistency, both in the subtest ability scores as well in the overall reading ability scores. In addition, ISIP Early Reading produced extremely stable scores over time, even between testing instances five months apart. These outstanding results could stem from a number of converging reasons. First, the authors, reading experts Drs. Patricia Mathes and Joe Torgesen, took great care in constructing the ISIP Early Reading item pool. They utilized the most up to date findings in early reading research as a basis for the item types and content they produced for istation. Furthermore, the ISIP Early Reading items have been operational for several years in previous versions of the program. Inconsistent items have been culled over time, resulting in a very stable item pool. Finally, ISIP Early Reading is an engaging and adaptive computer-based assessment program. Items are presented to students at their ability and using high quality computer animation. Students feel they are "playing a game" rather than "taking another test," which probably results in less off task behavior during assessment, producing more consistent results.

Evidence of concurrent validity, can be found in the numerous strong, positive relationships to external measures of reading constructs. Cohen (1988) suggested correlations around 0.3 could be considered moderate and those around 0.5 could be considered large. Hopkins (2009) expanded the upper end of Cohen's scale to include correlations around 0.7 as very large, and those around 0.9 as nearly perfect. Given those criteria, the data from the current study (cf. Tables 4-8) show mostly large to very large criterion validity with scores from well known external measures, such as CTOPP, GORT-4, PPVT-III, TOWRE, WJ-III ACH, WLPB-R, and WIAT-II, as well as with TPRI and ITBS. In addition, validity results show that ISIP Overall Reading is a stronger predictor than DIBELS ORF for TAKS Reading, using scores from one to five months prior to TAKS administration.

Taken together, the evidence supports the claim that ISIP Early Reading produces reliable and valid data for measuring key areas of reading development, such as phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, as well as overall reading ability.

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program. Study results were used to inform the alignment of performance standards across assessments. This alignment may provide an advanced indicator about whether or not students are on track to meet the performance standards on a subsequent EOC assessment. The table below shows (1) the sample sizes available for each analysis and (2) the correlations between scores from linked EOC tests.

All data for the STAAR EOC Linking Studies derive from low-stakes test administrations in 20092011. The Algebra links are based on a single group of students, and rely on low-stakes scores from operational administrations in 2009 (Algebra I) and 2011 (Algebra II). English links rely on stand-alone field tests (English I in 2010; English II & III in 2011). While the English I – English II links utilize scores from a single group of students, English II and English III stand-alone field tests were both administered for the first time in 2011. As such, examinees were matched statistically across assessments to create pairs of scores for analysis. Low-stakes testing scenarios generally produce lower levels of motivation among examinees. We anticipate that under high-stakes, motivated STAAR assessment conditions in 2012 and beyond, correlations between STAAR EOC tests will increase.

STAAR EOC Link			
From	**To**	**Sample Size**	**Correlation***
English I reading	English II reading	17,159	0.67
English I writing	English II writing	16,641	0.71
English II reading	English III reading	68,054	0.61
English II writing	English III writing	68,691	0.68
Algebra I	Algebra II	22,075	0.68

*Correlations are statistical measures of the relationships between scores on separate STAAR assessments. Correlations can range from -1 to 1; high positive values indicate strong positive relationships. For example, students with high STAAR Algebra I scores tend to have high STAAR Algebra II scores.

STAAR-to-TAKS Comparison Studies

The STAAR-to-TAKS comparison studies were designed to establish empirical links between student performance on high school TAKS assessments and student performance on STAAR EOC assessments. These studies are based on STAAR EOC scores and TAKS scores from a single group of students who took both assessments in 2011. STAAR EOC is intended to be more rigorous than the high school TAKS assessments, so the results of the STAAR-to-TAKS comparison studies were used to identify lower bounds for the STAAR EOC performance standards in each subject area. The table below shows (1) the sample sizes available for each analysis and (2) the correlations between EOC test scores and corresponding TAKS test scores. EOC assessments were linked to the TAKS assessments most commonly taken in the same grade level (e.g., STAAR Algebra I was linked to TAKS Grade 9 mathematics).

All STAAR data for the comparison studies derive from low-stakes test administrations. Specifically, data for all EOC mathematics and science assessments, English I, and U.S. history come from operational administrations in 2011. World history, English II, and English III data come from stand-alone field tests in 2011. Low-stakes testing scenarios generally produce lower levels of motivation among examinees. Although no additional STAAR-to-TAKS comparison studies are planned as Texas transitions from the TAKS program to the STAAR program, it is reasonable to suspect correlations between high-stakes, motivated STAAR scores and high-stakes, motivated TAKS scores would be larger than those reported in the table below.

STAAR to TAKS Comparison Studies

STAAR Test	TAKS Test	Sample Size	Correlation*
English I reading**	Grade 9 reading	112,256	0.62
English I writing	Grade 9 reading	116,941	0.60
English II reading	Grade 10 English language arts	28,588	0.59
English II writing	Grade 10 English language arts	28,176	0.63
English III reading	Grade 11 English language arts	27,564	0.49
English III writing	Grade 11 English language arts	27,385	0.60
Algebra I**	Grade 9 mathematics	98,555	0.69
Algebra II	Grade 11 mathematics	34,281	0.58
Geometry	Grade 10 mathematics	64,004	0.65
Biology	Grade 10 science	22,942	0.71
Chemistry	Grade 10 science	54,070	0.69
Physics	Grade 11 science	113,398	0.62
World Geography	N/A	N/A	
World History	Grade 10 social studies	21,172	0.69
U.S. History	Grade 11 social studies	83,994	0.66

*Correlations are statistical measures of the relationships between STAAR scores and TAKS scores. Correlations can range from -1 to 1; high positive values indicate strong positive relationships. For example, students with high STAAR Algebra I scores tended to have high TAKS grade 9 mathematics scores.

**The English I reading and Algebra I comparison studies will be used to provide TAKS *Met Standard* passing indicators for grade 8 students who are enrolled in English I or Algebra I and take STAAR assessments rather than TAKS assessments in 2012. *Met Standard* passing indicators for these students will be used for Adequate Yearly Progress reporting.

APPENDIX E

TEACHER EVALUATION INFORMATION

Teacher Evaluation Information

There are three components to the district's Teacher Appraisal and Development System (TADS): Instructional Practices, Student Performance, and Professional Expectations. The Performance Criteria Weighted Percentages of each of these components are: (a) Instructional Practices – 50%; (b) Student Performance – 30%; and (c) Professional Expectations – 20%. If a teacher does not have a Student Performance Rating, the teacher's default rating percentages will be: Instructional Practices – 70% and Professional Expectations – 30%. Within these components there are three sets of criteria: Three Planning Criteria (Instructional Practices), Ten Instruction Criteria (Instructional Practices), and Nine Professionalism Criteria (Professional Expectations). Within the Planning (PL) Component, the following Instructional Practice Criteria expect that the teacher:

- PL-1 Develops student learning goals
- PL-2 Collects, tracks, and uses student data to drive instruction
- PL-3 Designs effective lesson plans, units, and assessments

Within the Instruction (I) Component – the Instructional Practice Criteria in this section should demonstrate that the teacher:

- I-1 Facilitates organized, student-centered, objective-driven lessons
- I-2 Checks for student understanding and responds to student misunderstanding
- I-3 Differentiates instruction for student needs by employing a variety of instructional strategies
- I-4 Engages students in work that develops higher-level thinking skills

- I-5 Maximizes instructional time
- I-6 Communicates content and concepts to students
- I-7 Promotes high academic expectations for students
- I-8 Students actively participating in lesson activities
- I-9 Sets and implements discipline-management procedures
- I-10 Builds a positive and respectful classroom environment

Within the Professionalism (PR) Component – Professional Expectations Criteria, the teacher:

- PR-1 Complies with policies and procedures at school
- PR-2 Treats colleagues with respect throughout all aspects of work
- PR-3 Complies with teacher attendance policies
- PR-4 Dresses professionally according to school policy
- PR-5 Collaborates with colleagues
- PR-6 Implements school rules
- PR-7 Communicates with parents throughout the year
- PR-8 Seeks feedback in order to improve performance
- PR-9 Participates in professional development and applies learning.

There are four performance levels when rating criteria (Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement, and Ineffective). (Source: HISD TADS, 2016)

Teacher Appraisal and Development System Proposed Summative Ratings Calculation Method

I. The three TADS components[1] would have the following weights within teachers' Summative Appraisal Ratings[2].

II. The various types of Student Performance measures would have different weights within the Student Performance final rating.

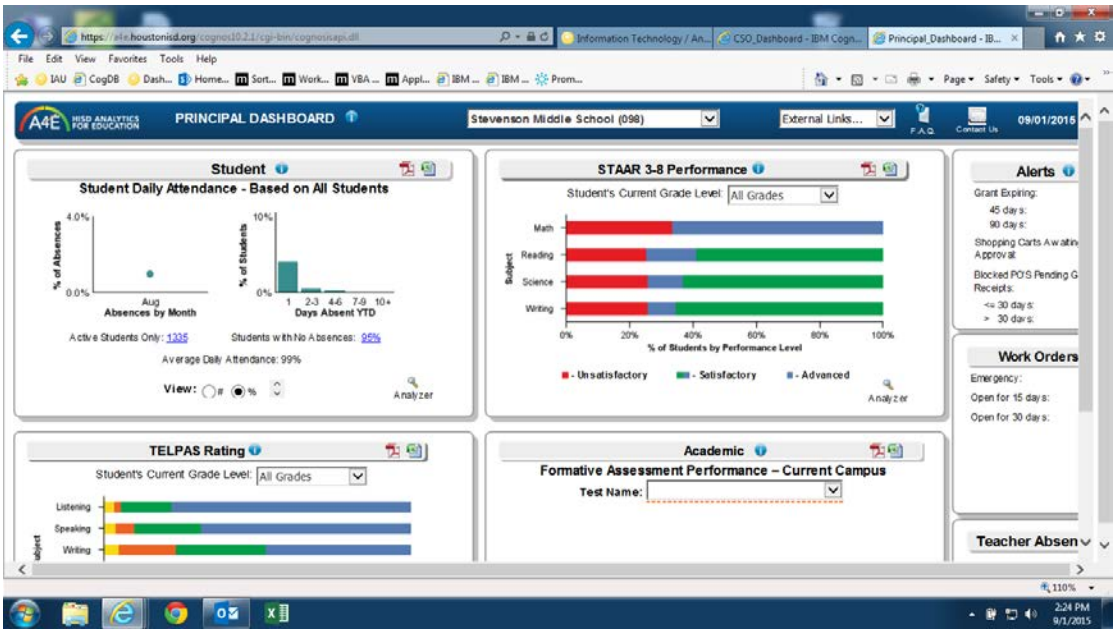
	VA + CG Progress	Student Progress Progress Only	Progress	CG Only	
III. The component weights are applied using a weighted average to derive the summative appraisal rating.					
Value-Added[3]	20	15		20	
Comparative Growth	10	10	20	30	
Student Progress		5	10	10	30
Student Performance Subtotal	**30**	**30**	**30**	**30**	**30**

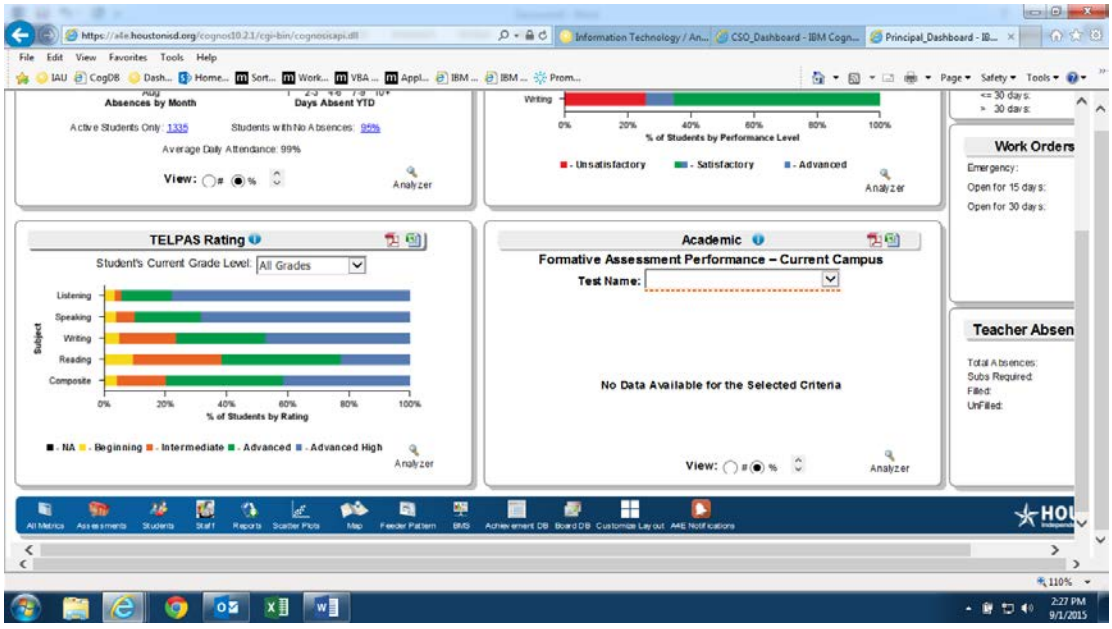
	Highly Effective	Effective	Needs Improvement	Ineffect
Score	3.5 – 4.0	2.5 – 3.4	1.5	1.0 –

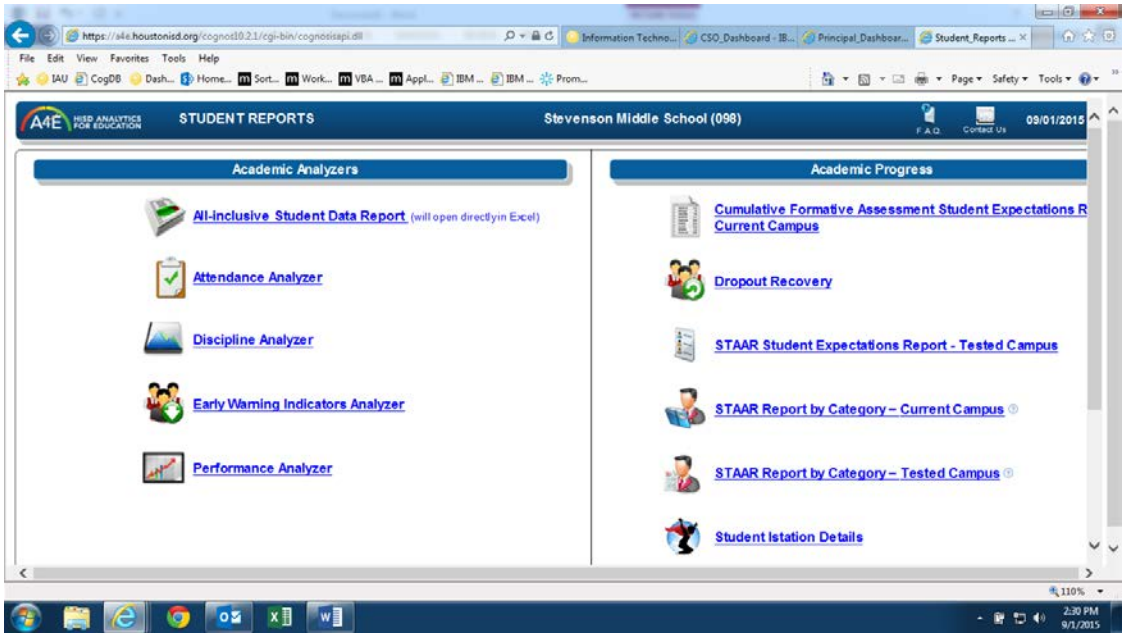
APPENDIX F

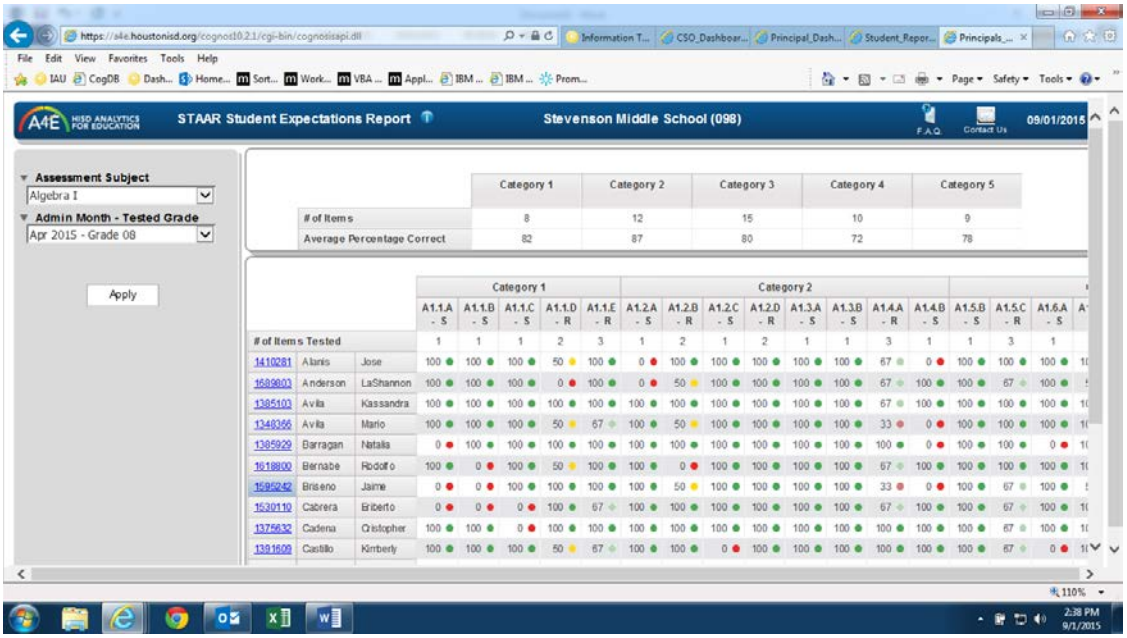
DISTRICT DASHBOARD SAMPLE

Chief and Principal Level Dashboards









Source: CSO and Principals Dashboards, HISD 2015

APPENDIX G

OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

Observation Protocols

I will also spend time in the classroom doing observations of the teacher's classroom teaching style and pedagogy. There are certain culturally responsive clues that I will be looking for. In addition to viewing how the teacher interacts with the students, I will also observe the artifacts around the room in the form of culturally relevant literature and evidence of student work. I will perform two observations per classroom. Dr. Venita Holmes, manager of the Research Program Evaluation Department, has agreed to complete a third observation in order to have inter rater reliability. Additionally, in order to ensure that we are looking for the same things, I will create a list of culturally responsive cues based on the work of Gay (2010), Ladson-Billings (2009), Delpit (2006), and Blankstein and Noguera (2015). Each visit will last at least one hour, but no more than eight hours.

In order to establish trustworthiness and credibility, I will: a) perform two observations per classroom; b) interact with the teachers and provide the rationale as to why this work is important; c) Dr. Venita Holmes, manager of the Research Program Evaluation Department, has agreed to complete a third observation, as a peer researcher, in order to have inter-rater reliability; and d) complete an audit trail in order to ensure that the research is performed the same way each time (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Some of the cues I will be looking for will be evidence of:

Project Based Learning (PBL) - Project-based learning allows for personalization of the learning environment and engagement for students from different cultures. Effective PBL should focus on rigor, aligned to college- and career-ready standards. Studies have shown that rigor improves student achievement (Gray, 2008). There are several critical components of PBL that should be incorporated into the strategy in order to ensure effectiveness (Larmer et al, 2015) that are directly tied to cultural values of African Americans. These components are: a) Key Knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills - focused on student learning goals, standards-based content, and skills such as critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration, and self-management (spirituality); b) Challenging Problem or Question - engaging problem to solve or a question to answer, at the appropriate level (verve); c) Sustained Inquiry - rigorous, extended opportunity to ask questions, find answers, and apply what was learned (movement); d) Authenticity - Allows real-world activities that are of interest to the students (expressive individualism); e) Student Voice & Choice - Students have a say about the project they chose and how they create the final product (harmony, affect); f) Reflection - Students and teachers reflect on what they learned and the effectiveness and quality of the project, including challenges and how to overcome them (affect); g) Critique & Revision - Students give, receive, and use feedback to improve their product (orality); h) Public Product - Students report on their findings by explaining, displaying and/or presenting it to people outside of the classroom (orality; expressive individualism); and j) 21st Century Skills - Allows the use of technology and collaboration with peers (communalism, verve, social time orientation). Project-based learning allows students to have an opportunity to apply, deepen, and extend learning, as well as develop 21st century skills that will make them college and career ready.

Scaffolding - Another evidence-based pedagogical strategy that should be used to increase the academic achievement of all students, including students of color, is building bridges or scaffolding. Scaffolding helps students to improve because it meets them where they are (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Matching the teaching style with the diverse learning styles, referred to as "cultural congruence" (p. 174) is an important component of scaffolding. It is important to note that scaffolding in education, like scaffolding in construction is needed while the student is being introduced to new information. Once the student masters the information, the supports used to help the student get to that point are removed. The purpose of scaffolding is to eventually create independent learners (Larkin, 2002).Examples of what constitute scaffolding include modeling, thinking aloud, and students helping each other. Additional scaffolding supports include graphic organizers, templates, and guides (Larkin, 2002). It is important for teachers to be properly trained in how to incorporate scaffolding as a teaching strategy because, although it is a great benefit to children, if used improperly, it can be difficult to do. Teachers have to be cognizant of the students' uniqueness and educational needs. The teacher must be prepared to incorporate different scaffolding strategies in the classroom; therefore, it can be time consuming. Teachers also must be extremely knowledgeable of the curriculum in order for scaffolding to greatly the students, so professional development in the subject that they teach is also critical and goes hand in hand with scaffolding.

Differentiated instruction - Differentiated instruction is effective because it allows students to learn based on their readiness level, interests, and preferred way of learning (Littky, 2015). As with scaffolding, teachers must understand who the students are, what they know, and how they learn. Differentiated instruction, key word being instruction, means that the teachers must be well versed in the curriculum and have a clear understanding of the course and different strategies needed to help students achieve to their maximum ability; therefore, professional development in the teacher's subject matter is also an important component to professional development in the effective use of differentiated instruction. Teachers who differentiate instruction know that students are different. They come to them with different knowledge, experiences, and interests, different levels of readiness, different languages and culture, and they learn differently (Gay, 2000, 2010). If properly used, differentiated instruction can support the values of the African American culture in that it can support verve, expressive individualism, and harmony.

Caring - The most critical part to all of these components is the ethic of care. Though this ethic cannot be taught, per se, it can be explained. Teachers who want to make a difference in the lives of students will demonstrate the characteristics of caring to the students. Additionally, caring does not mean lowering standards or allowing students to do less, it actually means ensuring that the rigor is there and that students have an opportunity to learn where they are, and be treated as competent beings (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Gay, 2009, Delpit, 1995, 2006).

I will take notes during the observation. These notes will be included in final analysis. A thick description of the classroom and all that is observed will be included. With permission, some of the observations will be audio-taped, but not video-taped.